SEPTEMBER 15, 2003

Terry Eagleton on Eric Hobsbawm

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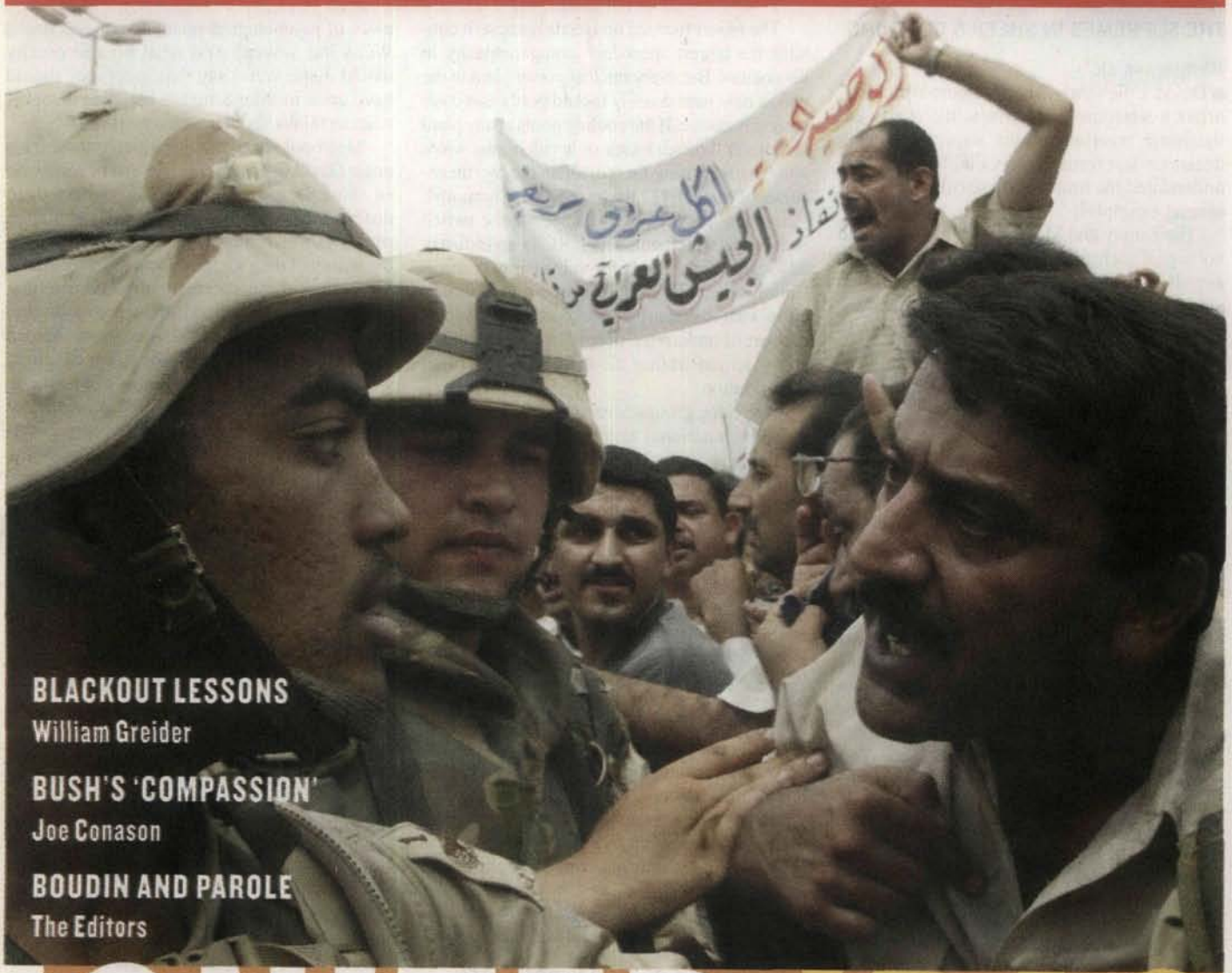

BLACKOUT LESSONS
William Greider

BUSH'S 'COMPASSION'
Joe Conason

BOUDIN AND PAROLE
The Editors

IGNITED IRAQ

A Baghdad Journal

by PETER DAVIS

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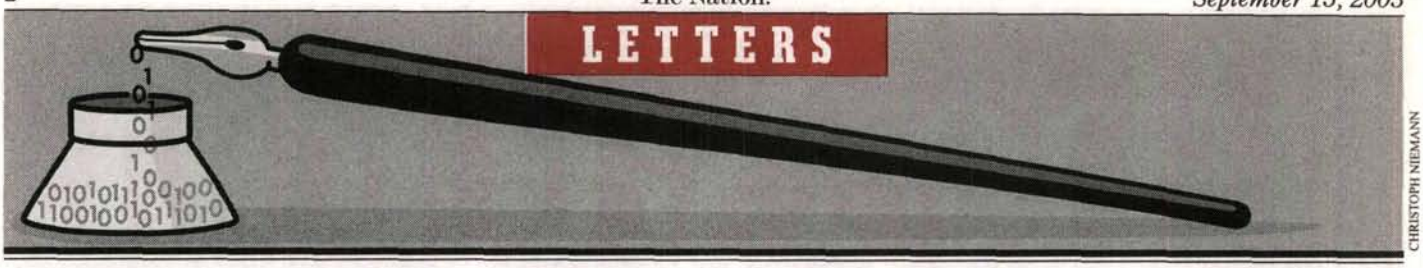

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

THE SUPREMES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Washington, DC

■ David Cole's July 21/28 "Court-Watching" offers a welcome corrective to the overly enthusiastic reactions to the Supreme Court's decisions last term. Even Cole, however, has understated the limits of these rulings. Two of several examples:

The Family and Medical Leave Act case did not signal a change in direction in the Court's assault on the national government. The act was aimed at discrimination against women, and the Court has always been very strong in this area. In an earlier case, Rehnquist, who wrote the Family Leave Act decision, had already suggested that laws to protect racial minorities and women might be more constitutionally acceptable than laws protecting others. Moreover, he has not been uniformly hostile to women in discrimination cases involving them—he voted with the majority to force VMI to accept women (and although he did vote against the Violence Against Women Act, that was based on an interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment in general).

The affirmative-action cases do little to make educational affirmative action more acceptable to the courts than it is now; they merely keep the status quo. In the law school case, the Court allowed race to continue to be considered in order to achieve educational diversity, reaffirming the 1978 *Bakke* case. This was obviously a great victory in light of the current attacks on diversity. But in the college case they made it very difficult to use point scores, and insisted on individualized decision-making. This may be feasible for colleges, but it is impossible for elementary and secondary schools. Children haven't done much at these young ages, even at the high school entry level, except to get grades. While avoiding the diversity issue, federal judges have struck down affirmative-action plans for magnet schools in the Washington area, at the Boston Latin School and elsewhere as not sufficiently "narrowly tailored." These schools will not be helped by the Court's rulings, which will continue to make even a limited amount of elementary and secondary school desegregation very difficult.

HERMAN SCHWARTZ

POOLS FOR SITTING DUCKS

Durham, NC

■ Thanks to Alexander Cockburn for his column on homegrown nuclear perils ["Beat the Devil," July 21/28]. I wrote one of the vulnerability studies he refers to, on Progress Energy's Shearon Harris nuclear plant near Raleigh, North Carolina (www.ncwarn.org/Risk_Reduction/Reports/SecurityReport.pdf).

The report focused on Harris because it contains the largest spent-fuel storage capacity in the country. But every nuclear power plant in the nation now uses densely racked pools as a cost-cutting measure. If the cooling pools at any plant lose water through attack or accident, the waste will burn, releasing far more than the two megacuries of cesium-137 that escaped at Chernobyl.

Saying that the NRC is asleep at the switch is an understatement. The NRC is an industry advocate that is actively subverting science. Commissioner Ed McGaffigan this year directed his staff to prepare a conclusion-driven report to "sort of undermine deeply" a new Princeton study demonstrating the danger of spent fuel auto-ignition.

Watchdog groups across the country are developing a national campaign for a two-point storage plan that takes into account our custodial obligations for nuclear waste for the next few centuries. Move all waste over five years old into hardened, bunkered dry storage; for newer waste, return to the original cooling pool design, leaving enough separation between spent fuel assemblies to prevent auto-ignition.

We insist that this storage be on-site. The proposed Yucca Mountain dump is on top of a geological fault, unlikely ever to be licensed, and will have only a fraction of the capacity necessary for this country's spent fuel.

Never economical (the nuclear power industry could not function without outrageous liability limits and taxpayer-subsidized insurance under the Price-Anderson Act), new nuclear facilities are desired by utilities, as subsidy-mills, despite sustained economic contraction and huge debts.

STAN GOFF
Security analyst, North Carolina Waste Awareness and Reduction Network

THE ROSENBERGS, 50 YEARS LATER

Sanbornton, NH

■ Philip Weiss's review of Robert Meeropol's *An Execution in the Family* ["Secrets and Lies," July 14] left me with feelings of loathing toward the reviewer. The absolute low point was Weiss's claim that the Rosenbergs lied to their sons about who they were. The government executed the Rosenbergs on the falsified claim that they handed the atomic bomb to the Soviets. In that context, Ethel Rosenberg's prison statement to her very young sons that their parents were innocent was no lie (although the government still lies in order to kill). Robert Meeropol, according to Weiss, didn't fess up to feeling hatred toward his parents for being executed rather than going along with the government's lies to save their lives. What right does Weiss have to make presumptions about someone else's psyche? What a piece of psychological manipulation and deceit Weiss has woven! And what bizarre cruelty would make Weiss say that Meeropol should have gone to Sing Sing the better to discover what he thinks about his parents' death?

Meeropol wrote that his attitude toward his uncle David Greenglass is like that of Jews who sit *shiva* for a living person, to consider them dead; he also says there should be reconciliation rituals in which murderers express remorse to the family of their victims. Doing further injury, Weiss uses these statements to advocate that Meeropol be the one to initiate reconciliation with Greenglass! It is Greenglass, who helped to send the Rosenbergs to the death chamber, who should be asking forgiveness of Meeropol.

Many of us still remember that awful, hot evening in June, fifty years ago, when we waited to learn if Eisenhower would reprieve the Rosenbergs. It was a terrible, terrible time!

KENNETH J. REICHSTEIN

Brooklyn

■ Philip Weiss is offended that the Rosenbergs wouldn't tell their young boys that they were Communists. Why be so guarded, I hear him wonder. After all, what could happen? He concludes: "The death penalty only sows confusion." Wrong. It sows terror. Nothing confusing about it.

ETHAN YOUNG

New York City

■ Philip Weiss hopes that "the passage of fifty years might have cleared the passions that once inflamed the Rosenberg case." Theirs, however, is a tragic, even a mythic, story, reminiscent in some ways of *Antigone*, the eternal confrontation of man and the state. By 1950, the state Ethel and Julius defied was organizing witch hunts to repress freedom at home and had begun marching in the footsteps of Japanese colonialism in East Asia. By the time of the executions, US bombing had killed and wounded millions of innocent Koreans. What crime, if any, one or both Rosenbergs might have committed remains unknown, because the trial was not an impartial search for the truth by due process; it was a show trial of scapegoats for everything from the Chinese revolution and the Korean War stalemate to the Soviet bomb and domestic criticism of the state. The minor question of their guilt or innocence of the charges should never displace the historical context and the political motivation for the trial.

MOSS ROBERTS

'THE BLUE HOUR' REVISITED

New York City

■ The poems of Carolyn Forché, like those of other significant poets, have always been con-

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EDITORIALS

The Tragedy of Iraq

With the August 19 bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, and with the deaths of twenty-three people so far—including the chief of the UN mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello—the troubled US occupation of Iraq has evolved into a tragedy not just for the Iraqi people but for the international community. Indeed, the deteriorating security in Iraq is rapidly becoming a threat to coalition forces as well as to the peace and stability of the Middle East. It therefore calls for urgent UN Security Council action aimed at replacing the Coalition Provisional Authority with a broader and more legitimate UN mandate.

By choosing to smash an already failing and fractured society, the United States has unleashed chaos and disorder it cannot control. As UN officials warned just before the bombing of the UN headquarters, if a legitimate government is not established in Iraq soon, the growing anarchy could overtake even the best efforts of coalition forces and eventually engulf the entire region.

The Bush Administration has alternately blamed remnants of the Baath regime and Islamist terrorists. But the problem is much larger than either of those threats. Coalition forces are now confronted with a range of distinct yet overlapping problems: an increasingly well-organized guerrilla movement; continued lawlessness and disorder in many parts of the country; growing popular discontent and disgust at the US failure to provide security and restore basic services; the beginnings of an ethnic war between the Kurds and the Turkmens in the north and between Shiites and Sunnis in the center; and an expanding number of Islamic jihadists, who have come to Iraq from all over the Middle East to fight the Western infidels. And there is also the growing strength of radical Shiite clerics, who are waiting for a chance to rally their followers to some form of Islamic theocracy.

This complex and worrying picture presents no good options for US policy. Increasing the number of American troops, as Senator John McCain and others have suggested, would further inflame the Iraqi people and is no answer to the need for more police, more technicians, more administrators and, above all, more legitimacy. On the other hand, withdrawing American troops before a competent representative government is in place would leave the country on the verge of civil war and at the mercy of extremists of all political and ethnic stripes. Adding more international troops to the coalition to free American forces, as the Bush Administration proposes, would do little to change the complexion of the American occupation or the dangerous dynamic in Iraq.

The least bad option, then, is to internationalize the administration of Iraq not by adding international troops but by establishing a clear timetable and legal authority for turning over Iraq's administration first to a UN mandate and a truly multinational force—and then to the Iraqi people. The United States must bear most of the cost of rebuilding the country, but it must also relinquish control to a legitimately constituted UN transitional authority if it wants a stable Iraq. As French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin has correctly argued, we urgently need to move Iraq from the logic of occupation to the logic of restoring its sovereignty. This is what Vieira de Mello was trying to do, albeit in a slow and painfully indirect way, before his death. He and his aides had been tireless go-betweens for the Coalition Provisional Authority and the Iraqi people, and for the CPA and its hand-chosen Governing Council of Iraq, convincing chief administrator Paul Bremer that the GC had to be more than just an advisory body. He and his aides were also working hard to get more Arab and international support for the council, visiting Turkey, Egypt and Jordan, and pleading its case with other UN Security Council members.

But the Bush Administration presented obstacles to those

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efforts at every turn, refusing to delegate real power to the Governing Council or to cede greater authority to the UN in order to win the support of other countries like France, Germany, Turkey and India.

The Bush Administration's response to the UN bombing is to use the deaths of Vieira de Mello and his colleagues to shame other countries into sending more troops and money to Iraq—without giving them a say in the occupation. But the shame is on the White House, not only for its crass opportunism but for its refusal to make a real international effort possible. The Administration wants to spread the burden while keeping Iraq as its trophy. But only by giving it up can the United States win the international support the coalition forces so desperately need. Only by accepting a legitimate UN mandate for restoring Iraqi sovereignty will it make the region safe from the forces of chaos and extremism that its occupation has unleashed.

Kathy Boudin's Time

Kathy Boudin's parole from Bedford Hills Correctional Facility after twenty-two years is welcome and overdue. Welcome not because of her lingering celebrity status as a former Weather Underground fugitive but because parole is entirely appropriate for any inmate who has used her incarceration for the education of herself and other prisoners, who has fulfilled the terms of her sentence and who presents no threat of recidivism. Overdue, because the parole process had been stalled amid the high emotions still surrounding the 1981 Nyack Brink's robbery in which she was a passenger in the getaway vehicle—a crime that resulted in the murder of police officers Edward O'Grady and Waverly Brown, and of Brink's guard Peter Paige.

To some, Boudin is a symbol of the worst of the 1960s. But the way New York Governor George Pataki exploited the continuing grief of surviving family members to bury the reasonable policy of parole under unreasonable vengeance represented the worst of 1990s crime politics. The two commissioners who finally voted for Boudin's release, Daizzee Bouey and Vernon Manley, showed courage—and a sane, competent grasp of why parole exists.

Many questions are raised by the most recent chapter in Boudin's life, among them: If, as it is said, one of the tests of a civilization is the way it treats its criminals, should we not see Boudin's story as a clear demonstration that rehabilitation ought to be a principal goal of incarceration? At the same time, isn't it wrong for Boudin's case to eclipse those of other prisoners who have earned the right to parole but are left languishing in overcrowded prisons because they lack the means or high profile to bring their cases to public attention? (In some states, 80 percent of all applications are denied.) Moreover, how can we nourish the rage at official deceit and injustice that motivated the best of sixties activism and simultaneously banish forever the ends-justify-the-means ethic that Boudin, among others, now understands to be morally unacceptable?

A few weeks before the parole board made its decision, Chesa Boudin, Kathy's Rhodes-scholar son, stopped by the *Nation* of-

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COMMENT

fice to talk not only about his mother's case but about the invisible victims of the current system: the children of prisoners. His eloquent testimony dramatized the hidden human consequences of our leaders' preference for tough-on-crime posturing over the difficult business of dealing fairly, in the interests of justice and society, with what is now the highest per-capita prison population in the world.

Without sentimentalizing or minimizing the seriousness of Boudin's crime, we ought to see in this moment an opportunity to recognize her life in prison as a model for others to emulate—including her work in adult education and also her advocacy on behalf of prisoners with AIDS. The purpose of parole, too rarely fulfilled, is to make such recognition possible.

COMMENT

Lessons of the Blackout

The New York-to-Detroit blackout was one of those brief, sensational moments of chaos that leave behind a resonant political message. There have been many such moments in the past few years, when "efficient markets" turned on a gullible citizenry and delivered brutish reprisals: when California's deregulated energy market, led by Enron, scammed consumers for tens of billions in a manipulated price run-up; when the stock-market meltdown ate the baby boomers' retirement savings; when newly created megabanks like Citigroup and JP Morgan Chase duped their retail customers and masterminded gross financial frauds for companies like Enron; when the public's "trustee" of the broadcasting airwaves, the FCC, granted still greater concentration for the major media conglomerates. One way or another, people and politicians rebelled.

The common message of these events is the end of an ideological era. The long-running conservative imperative for deregulation has been a driving idea for thirty years. The public interest embedded in economic regulation was nullified by law, the marketplace set free to work its "magic." Great changes swept across business and financial sectors as a result, many new doors were opened for technological advancements. But an ugly corollary always accompanied the triumph of markets: Left unprotected by legal guarantees and restraints, the people are ignored, abused and screwed, then often have to pay to clean up the mess. Many more people understand this now, more concretely and universally than at any time since the 1970s, and politics is beginning to respond (even right-wingers mobilized against the FCC's giveaway). The Bush crowd will never give in to reality (yet another reason to toss them out next year).

A new moment has arrived, nevertheless. Political awareness may shift gradually, but it's time to think anew and ask how the regulatory system can be repaired, restored, reformed to carry out the public goals that were systematically dismantled. Where are the left-liberal thinkers with new concepts? Environmentalists, for instance, have created voluntary enforcement agencies like the Forest Stewardship Council, which could be prototypes for redesigning more effective government regulatory agencies.

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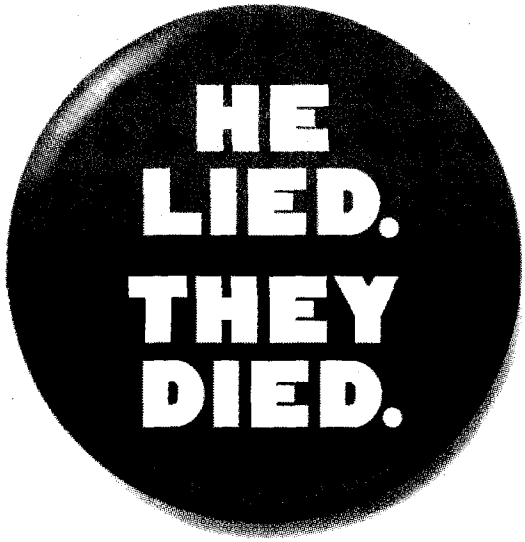

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COMMENT

The exploration must begin by recognizing how and why the old regulatory systems failed. The politics of deregulation was not driven by corporate greed alone (though greed was always a hearty motivation). The old liberal order is not going to be re-enacted—and shouldn't be, because the old order broke down for its own reasons. To be politically viable, a new regulatory system must overcome the old system's failures.

Regulatory agencies that focused on a single sector were always vulnerable to capture by the regulated industry itself, whether they were banks or coal companies or electric utilities. The regulatory rules were also sometimes oblivious to big economic changes and thus in effect rendered obsolete by new technologies like computerization or by persistent disorders like inflation. Regulatory legislation was typically compromised by putting off the hardest decisions—assigning fundamental choices to remote regulators who would be highly susceptible to industrial pressures or White House muscle. Right now, the Bush team is rolling back, by executive fiat, clean-air legislation enacted thirty years ago. Many regulatory laws of the modern era were not laws in any real sense, but more in the nature of wishful political promises. Many, like Superfund cleanups and eliminating hazardous chemicals, remain unfulfilled goals.

Above all, what was lost and forgotten over many years was the original genius of New Deal reforms—the understanding that social protections and economic well-being are not separate and incompatible but public values that can and should work together. A banking system cannot be sound if it is dominated by a few behemoths that regard themselves as above the law or if millions of Americans are left "unbanked" because they can't afford the sky-high fees of a checking account. A telecommunications industry cannot be healthy if it shuts off ownership and access to the diversity of Americans. The electricity sector cannot be efficient when it breaks down catastrophically and bilks its own customers.

The design questions will be hard to answer, so it would be healthy to start some lively arguments over competing approaches. The hardest part, however, is reclaiming the ethos of shared social values as central to economic prosperity. Deregulation essentially boosts returns by throwing some people over the side—usually people in the bottom half who get priced out—but during hard economic patches those "liberated" industries are always back at government's door, demanding assistance. This is a rotten bargain for society. As the public at large gets the meaning, the mood will be ripe for demanding a new deal.

WILLIAM GREIDER

Nation *national correspondent William Greider is the author of* The Soul of Capitalism, *just published by Simon & Schuster.*

CALVIN TRILLIN

JUST WAIT

The White House said, although it wasn't true,
Iraq must be invaded, PDQ,
Since terrorists, who'd caught us unaware,
Were with Iraq, and always gathered there.

They didn't then, but more come every day,
So they can drive the infidels away.
Will other lies come true? Can we deduce
That Baghdad's A-bomb plants will now produce?

Women's Voices

Through the corporate media's electronic collage of murders, sex scandals, celebrity sightings and Pentagon-generated fantasy can be heard a constant buzz—"war, terror, security"—but who knows what these words really mean to people here or in other countries? Since 9/11, the voices of ordinary civilians, particularly women, have virtually disappeared from the public discourse on these matters, leaving us only with pundits and military experts.

Deeply troubled by this trend, board members of Women's WORLD, a global free-speech network of feminist writers, designed a writing contest to bring women's ideas on war and terror to wider public attention. The Nation Institute co-sponsored the project, and the Puffin Foundation gave us a small grant to cover the prizes. The contest, "Women's Voices in War Zones," asked for personal essays in response to questions like, "Do you live in a war zone or state of terror? Is it personal or public?" We circulated the call through ads in *The Nation* and global feminist listservs and websites. But we had no idea what kind of response we would get.

We got an astonishing outpouring of work: 290 essays from forty-five different countries, and not only from the expected students, freelancers and academics. We got essays from a homeless woman living in a Bronx shelter; an illegal immigrant from Mexico; Burundian refugees in a Tanzanian camp; an Iranian feminist under death threat; Americans who were becoming politically active for the first time; a Karen tribal activist; women who had lived through wars from World War II to the Congo, Lebanon, Kosovo, Armenia, Colombia, Azerbaijan, Israel, Palestine, India; survivors of acid attacks, stalkers, kidnappers—the stories just kept coming, stories of state violence, ethnic violence, domestic violence, of individual and group resistance. So many were good that the judges—Ammiel Alcalay, Paula Giddings and Katha Pollitt—decided we had to double the number of prizes. (The prizewinning essays and some others are online at www.wworld.org.)

I came away from the contest heartened to know there are so many good people out there and impressed by the way the Internet has created such rich possibilities for communication among them. And I thought of Emily Dickinson's "This is my letter to the world/ That never wrote to me." For these essays were like letters, from people trying to get under the radar screens of their govern-

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COMMENT

ments and media and talk directly with one another. If only we could organize such political communication on a large scale, so the trash-talk jockeys and Washington pundits would have to compete with voices of real feeling and experience. Following is just one of the extraordinary pieces we received, from Ugandan writer Monica Arac de Nyeko. MEREDITH TAX

Meredith Tax is the president of Women's WORLD.

In the Stars

by Monica Arac de Nyeko

My mother used to talk about him; my Uncle Oryema. How she begged him not to become a soldier. "He didn't listen," she always said and swallowed hard like she never forgave him for disappearing from our grasp like *raa* smoke. He was so far away from home, somewhere in the jungles, holding his rifle when death beckoned. A man brought the news to my grandma. Said the gunfire had been heavy. Her son had been shot in the stomach. That he had tied an old green army uniform to hold his bowels together and fled for his life. The man offered to go back to search for our Uncle Oryema with another uncle who later joined the army, to fight the demons of his brother's death that haunted him. They combed Kituba trees where they say spirits live, the long grasses of the blazing Kitgum wilderness with scorpions and snakes. Uncle Oryema would now remain a memory in our hearts. On his "grave" grandma laid four large stones to show where we should have laid his body.

Of the many things about him, it's the toffee sweets he brought me when he returned from college and told Ma he was going to fight that I remember most. That day he took me to the cinema—my first time ever to see a motion picture, with images the size of our city council house.

I went to the family cemetery yesterday. There was Ma lying beside Uncle Oryema; she joined him seven years later. At least she had not been struck on the head with an ax or set ablaze in a hut. Meningitis took her.

Worry had drained Ma's spirit. When she followed Uncle Oryema into death, I wished that perhaps she would learn to forgive him. She would learn not to worry about this war. But she had died knowing we would never go to school because it was always bullets and bombs. Our virginity would fall prey to wicked savagery. We would be abducted and forced to fight. Our bodies would be food to vultures.

The 1986 war against the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda started as only a joke, but it has eaten away the Acholi tribe, who live in the north of the country. It's like an imaginary tale. Children are trained to be lethal massacre weapons. Sometimes they flee back home to seek what was taken from them, but they discover they cannot stay because their minds think of blood and killing only. They tell of the urine they drank from the unbearable thirst. The young girls, our former schoolmates, have been sex slaves and loathe male company. We will never know what happened to many of them.

Memories of nights in rain and gripping fear creep to our dreams. Sleep should be the one place where there is no worry. It should be dreamland, hopeland. But in our sleep there are ghosts of dead friends and relatives. The ones we watched pangas hack. Those we heard from our hiding places being flogged to death. Those we see headless, limbless, noseless, lipless when we blink.

It's sad that the situation is hopeless, and there is nothing much that those of us without power can do. Our government has been fighting futilely for sixteen years but they will not talk serious peace. Our president, Y.K. Museveni, compares Joseph Kony, the rebel leader, to a tiny jigger, the parasite that lives in feet and can be dealt with in an instant. But the numbers of Acholi civilians dwindle in cheap talk. They say in every news bulletin, "The war will end real soon"; "soon" has become sixteen years.

We have learned to seal our lips and pretend we know nothing of what goes on. We cannot trust anyone. The rebels do not care whether we live or die. We do not know why they fight. We know nothing of treaties signed by important men. We do not know what words like *terrorists*, *victims* and *universal declaration of human rights* mean. But we know that we are going to die, from bullets, hunger or hopelessness.

The low-ranked government soldiers, who are sent to protect us, run and hide in their brick-walled barracks to protect themselves when the rebels come. They return when it's calm to rape our grandmothers, light our huts for pure pleasure, and in the evening we hear the radios say, "Look what the bloody rebels did again. Take heart, brothers and sisters in the north, and try to understand that the government is liberating you." But we cannot try to understand, there is nothing to be understood.

For the army majors, as long as the war goes on, there will always be countries willing to donate large monies. Then they can buy banks, government property and own the entire nation. Their wives can own massage parlors and designer boutiques to serve foreign diplomats in the Sheraton, Equatorial or Grand Imperial hotels; their children can go to international schools and play with Barbie dolls.

When heaven seems so far sometimes, we dream and wait for miracles and look in the stars. The immortal stars whisper to us that they watch over us as we await our fate. So we place our hopes, not in the rebels or our government or the United Nations, but in the night sky.

Monica Arac de Nyeko comes from the Kitgum district of northern Uganda, which has been affected by war since 1986. She is a member of TAP, the Transcend Art and Peace network.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Handmaid in Babylon: The UN's Decline and Fall

"One has to be careful," said United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan in late August, "not to confuse the UN with the US." If the Secretary General had taken his own advice, maybe his Brazilian subordinate, Sergio Vieira de Mello, might not have been so summarily blown to pieces in Baghdad two days earlier.

Whichever group sent that truck bomb on its way decided that Vieira de Mello and his boss were so brazen in moving the UN to play a fig-leaf role in the US occupation of Iraq that spectacular action was necessary to draw attention to the process. So the UN man handpicked by the White House paid with his life.

To get a sense of how swift has been the conversion of the UN into after-sales service provider for the world's prime power, just go back to 1996, when the United States finally decided that Annan's predecessor as UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, had to go.

In a pleasing foreshadowing of Annan's plaintive remark cited above, Boutros-Ghali told Clinton's top foreign policy executives, "Please allow me from time to time to differ publicly from US policy." But unlike Annan he did so, harshly contrasting the West's concern for Bosnia, whose conflict he described as "a war of the rich," with its indifference to the genocide in Rwanda and to horrifying conditions throughout the Third World. Then, in May 1996, he went altogether too far, when he published the findings of a UN inquiry into the killing of a hundred refugees the previous month by Israel at a UN camp in south Lebanon.

In a minority of one on the Security Council, the United States insisted on exercising its veto of a second term for Boutros-Ghali. James Rubin, erstwhile State Department spokesman, wrote his epitaph: Boutros-Ghali was "unable to understand the importance of cooperation with the world's first power." It took another foreign policy operative of the Clinton era to identify Annan's appeal to Washington. Richard Holbrooke later recalled that in 1995 there was a "dual key" arrangement, whereby Boutros-Ghali and the NATO commander had to jointly approve bombing. Boutros-Ghali, to avoid the appearance of taking sides, vetoed almost all airstrikes against the Serbs. But when Boutros-Ghali was traveling, the UN key was left with Annan. "When Kofi turned it," Holbrooke told Philip Gourevitch of *The New Yorker*, "he became Secretary-General in waiting." There was also a further, very terrible service rendered by Annan, when, in deference to the American desire to keep Sarajevo in the limelight, he suppressed the warnings of Canadian Lieut. Gen. Roméo Dallaire that appalling massacres were about to start in Rwanda.

Of course, even in the UN's braver days, there were always the realities of power to be acknowledged, but Secretaries General like Dag Hammarskjöld and U Thant were men of stature. These days UN functionaries such as Annan and the late Vieira de Mello know full well that their careers depend on American patronage. Vieira de Mello was a bureaucrat, never an elected politician, instrumental in establishing the UN protectorate system in Kosovo. Then he was the beneficiary of an elaborate and instructive maneuver in which the United States sought to dislodge the inconvenient Jose Mauricio Bustani, another Brazilian, from his post as head of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Chemical Weapons Convention's implementing organization. Bustani was no US cat's-paw but adamant in maintaining his organization's independence, and admired far and wide for his energy in seeking to rid the world of chemical weapons.

When UNSCOM was withdrawn from Iraq in 1998 in preparation for Operation Desert Fox, Bustani's OPCW was allowed in to continue verification of destruction of WMDs. In the spring of 2002, the Bush Administration feared Bustani would persuade Saddam to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention and accept inspections from Bustani's organization, thus allowing the possibility of credible estimates of Iraq's arsenal that might prove unhelpful to the United States. Brazil was informed that if it supported the ouster of Bustani, it would be rewarded with US backing for Vieira de Mello's elevation to the post of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, replacing another object of US disfavor, Mary Robinson.

Vieira de Mello was duly appointed. Then, earlier this year, the imperial finger crooked an urgent summons for him to come to Washington for inspection by Condoleezza Rice. Vieira de Mello made all the right noises. Desperate for UN cover, the Bush White House pressured Annan into naming Vieira de Mello UN Special Envoy to Iraq.

Vieira de Mello installed himself in Baghdad where, in cooperation with the US proconsul, Paul Bremer, his priority was to cobble together a puppet Governing Council of Iraq, serving at the pleasure of the Coalition Provisional Authority. The council, replete with such notorious fraudsters as Ahmad Chalabi, was formed on July 13. Nine days later Vieira de Mello was at the UN in New York, proclaiming with a straight face that "we now have a formal body of senior and distinguished Iraqi counterparts, with credibility and authority, with whom we can chart the way forward....we now enter a new stage that succeeds the disorienting power vacuum that followed the fall of the previous regime."

Though it did not formally recognize the Governing Council, the UN Security Council eagerly commended this achievement. The *Financial Times* editorialized on August 19: "America's friends, such as India, Turkey, Pakistan, and even France, which opposed the war, stand ready to help. But they need UN cover." Later that day in Baghdad, in the form of the truck bomb, came an answer. Two days later, Kofi Annan counseled on the dangers of confusing the UN with the US.

If he meant what he said, Annan should resign forthwith as the man who has done more than any figure alive to equate the two. But who would imagine Africa's Waldheim being capable of that? ■

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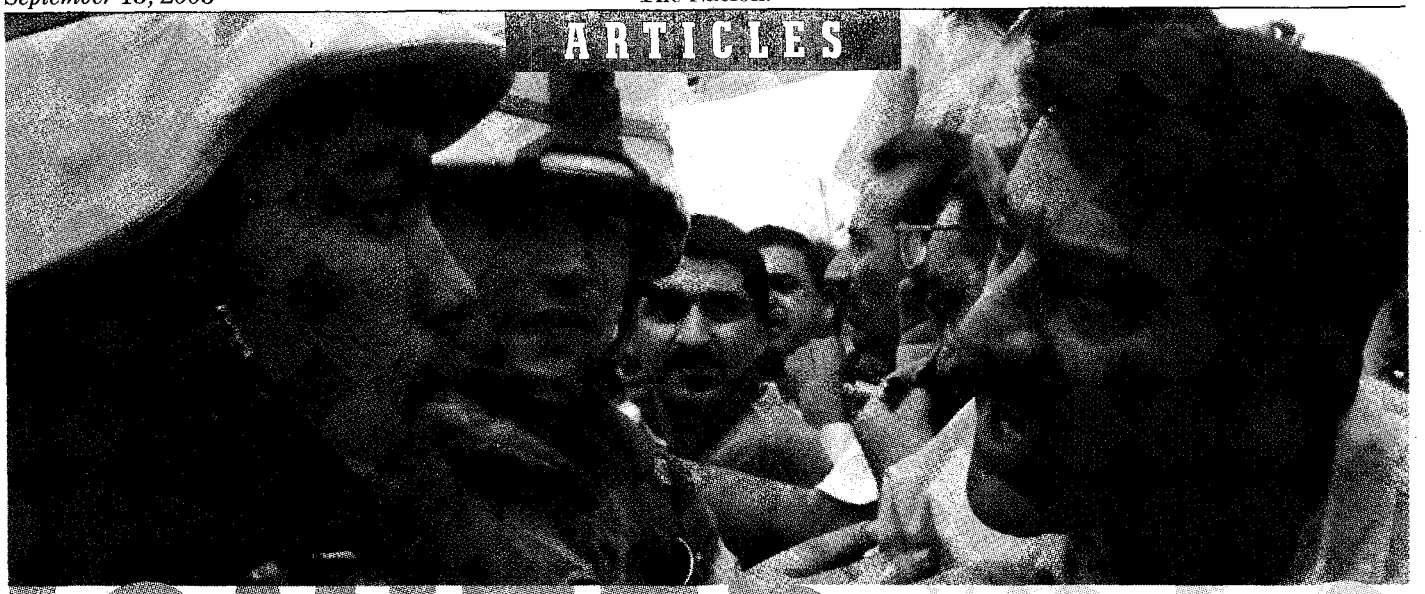

IGNITED IRAQ

A Baghdad Journal

by PETER DAVIS

During his final year and a half as lord of misrule, Saddam Hussein liked to joke that Iraqis should win the contract to rebuild the World Trade Center since they had so much experience at reconstruction after the Gulf War of 1991. As events unfolded, something like the opposite happened. The military-industrial complex that recently destroyed so much of Iraq will now be hired to repair the damage. Few Iraqis this summer believe that the postwar contractual arrangements are a coincidence. "You encouraged the looting and burning after you got finished bombing," a maintenance worker at the Baghdad Polytechnic Institute told me, "so you could get paid for putting it all back up again."

When the war began in March I was in Hanoi, where the US Embassy helpfully sent a fax to "American citizens in Vietnam" warning of the danger posed by "armed conflict with Iraq." "Remain vigilantly aware of surroundings, avoid crowds and demonstrations, keep a low profile.... This Public Announcement is being updated to alert Americans to an increased potential for anti-American violence," and on and on. Since Vietnam is neither a Muslim country nor one where threats against Americans have occurred—it is only a country we invaded a few wars ago—the conclusion was inescapable that the government knew how widely unpopular its action would be. Intellectual isolationism had led to global unilateralism, with the British as the tail of the kite. September 11 had both scared and emboldened us into the second of our new blitzing wars.

Dry, blazing, ignited Iraq is a country whose capital does not loom over its landscape but instead shimmers up out of the desert as though it may or may not eventually materialize. As soon as I arrived in the second week of July it was apparent the country's needs are so simple as to be alliterative: security, services and structure are the mantra, the *liberté-égalité-fraternité* of this proposed revolution from despotism to something resembling a representative distribution of power. There was still only sporadic electricity, the water was polluted and Baghdad was considered so dangerous Americans were warned not to go out at night and never to go anywhere without a driver and translator. "This is a rule," an American said to me the day I arrived. "Don't break it."

Yet there was something else, even more obvious than danger though easily overlooked in the rush to keep up with unfolding crises, that quickly became clear. Between most Americans and most Iraqis is a gulf more unbridgeable than the nearby Persian Gulf itself, both in terms of worldview and self-recognition. Like Americans, Iraqis have all kinds of opinions, but almost all of our new subject citizens have such utterly different concepts from ours of words like "freedom," "liberation" or even "country" and "national identity" that to speak of these where they are concerned is to court major misunderstanding before we have even begun. "Democracy," of course, has been pounded out of shape on the postwar anvil.

The best time of day in Iraq is between 5:30 and 7:30 in the morning, when everything is still in shade or shadow yet there is enough light for observation. Tradespeople are coming to work and merchants are filling the souks, offering a range of goods from air-conditioners to shoelaces to newly available magazines to fresh lamb. You could almost be anywhere east of Greece, and if you looked only at the market stalls and not at the scarred, charred and blasted buildings above, you would not know at such a time that although its army and government did not so much lose as melt away, this is now a conquered country. The worst time of day is late afternoon, when you expect the onset of coolness, relief from the inferno of noon, yet it is still so hot you

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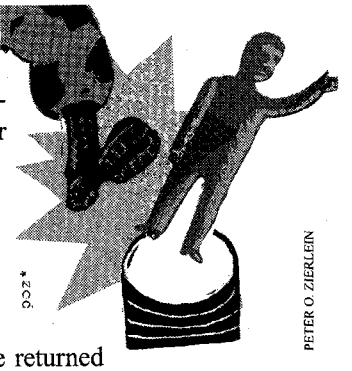
could bake bread in your car, and no one is moving who doesn't have to. Again, if you kept your eyes on the somnolent bazaars and the vendors who are now bestirring themselves only to ward off flies, you could easily forget you are in a territory occupied by a foreign force whose nationality you share and whose presence is the occasion for both earnest gratitude and violent resistance. The Bradleys rolling down the littered streets tell you where you are.

Know your colony. With a population of 26 million, Iraq possesses the approximate area of California and at least as many citizens who consider themselves candidates for leadership as are running to become that state's governor. Culturally, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers was thriving 4,000 years before Christ. Take numbers, for example. In *A History of Mathematics* by Carl B. Boyer, the author finds "a high order of civilization" with "progressive mathematical achievements" that include a Mesopotamian numerical base of 60 rather than the more common 10, a system that "has enjoyed a remarkably long life, for remnants survive even to this day in units of time and angle measure." Examples of their mathematical facility abound: "The fundamental arithmetic operations were handled by the Babylonians in a manner not unlike that which would be employed today.... One finds among the Old Babylonian tablets some table texts containing successive powers of a given number, analogous to our modern tables of logarithms.... The solution of a three-term quadratic equation seems to have exceeded by far the algebraic capabilities of the Egyptians."

All right then, politics. This is where we run into some problems. Hammurabi brought forth a system of laws admirable for its day, which was 1,750 BCE, but its commonly remembered feature was the vengeance code of an eye for an eye. Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians while extending his territory in the sixth century BCE, and his Babylonian magnificence was supported by slaves. Saladin, a Kurd to whom Saddam Hussein has likened himself, successfully beat back the twelfth-century Crusade, captured Jerusalem and built himself an empire extending from what is now Egypt to Syria to Yemen. It didn't last.

In recent centuries Iraq has seen itself traded from the Ottoman Empire to the British Empire in a deal that led to an ocean of oil for the West. With boundaries settled by a League of Nations mandate in 1920, Iraq gained its independence from Britain in 1932 and was ruled by kings until the monarchy was overthrown in 1958, which happens to be the only time I was in the Middle East until this past July, a detail whose usefulness I'll try to make clear presently. There followed a series of brutal coups until the Baath Party emerged, leading in due time to Saddam Hussein's ascendancy in 1979. Moreso than his predecessors, Saddam maintained himself through what has been described as the exemplary use of violence. According to the historian Charles Tripp, Saddam "reinforced certain tendencies in the history of Iraq, building up a powerful apparatus that brooks no opposition and provides scarcely any space for political activity other than on terms set by him." Just before I left for Iraq, the UN's chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix, explained Saddam's weakness to me: "He saw himself as the emperor of Mesopotamia, but unlike the Roman emperors who always kept one slave nearby to whisper to them that they were mortal, Saddam forgot to have that particular slave." Charles Tripp concludes that once Saddam is run off into history, "the contest for control of the narrative of the Iraqi state will continue, but in these circumstances there is a strong possibility that existing privileges will be entrenched and Iraqis will have good reason to fear subjection once more."

"Of course, Saddam Hussein's men tortured and imprisoned indiscriminately, that is true," said Memdi Salih, a former journalist who was my first interpreter in Baghdad. But there was a hesitancy in his tone, as well as in his use of the word "men" instead of personalizing the acts to Saddam himself as Saddam's more fervent enemies do, that pointed to Salih's own complex history. Many of the educated elite in Baghdad are tainted, if one is looking for purity, by some association with Baathists. Salih himself, a furrow-browed, thoughtful man, was in the party because, he said, "You had to be to do anything at all. We were all Baath Party members." This has rendered him unemployable by the returned exiles who Americans have put in charge of certain fields. "The new communications czar won't let any of us be hired," Salih said, "because he lived abroad and hires only exiles, who aren't really welcome by most of the public."



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Salih's anger at the United States is only a membrane from the surface. He expresses it by criticizing American-appointed Iraqis, such as those members of the governing council who either lived abroad or have no following, or both. He remains even more critical of the former regime, making a transitive verb of "vanish"—"Saddam's men vanished people for no reason at all." Then he returns to his earlier hesitancy. "The Baathist crimes are statistically exaggerated. It was possible to live in Iraq decently and comfortably under Saddam if you weren't actively opposing the regime." He said he had been patient with the US-British coalition, but so far he had seen very little progress. "Right now we need someone to issue orders, pay salaries, make communications work which are so very backward, educate people to the new tasks," he said, possibly with a shade of nostalgia for the days of firm leadership. "Maybe the coalition has made a step forward with the governing council, but I'm not too hopeful."

You can find support in these postwar, pre-peace days for any *prix fixe* opinion in Iraq. The coalition is in trouble. Easy. The occupation is popular. Also easy. Americans should stay/go/print new money. All well represented. The occupation is increasingly unpopular. Slam-dunk. You may have to wear thicker blinders to draw the conclusion that everything is rolling along smoothly after a predictably rocky start, but you can find that if you're determined to. I was looking for something beyond opinion, something including feelings and beliefs that would point to the American footprint and the Iraqi response. As we drove into a neighborhood that

Peter Davis was on assignment in Iraq this summer for The Nation. *His most recent book is* If You Came This Way: A Journey Through the Lives of the Underclass *(John Wiley). He received an Academy Award for his Vietnam War documentary* Hearts and Minds. *Research assistance provided by the Investigative Fund of the Nation Institute.*

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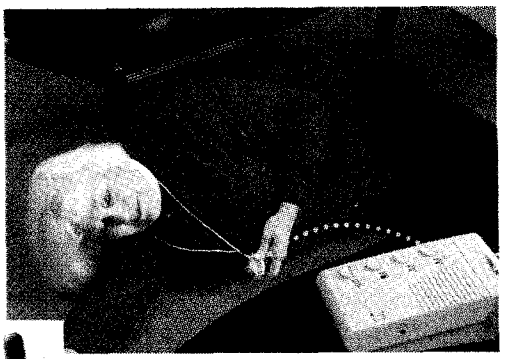

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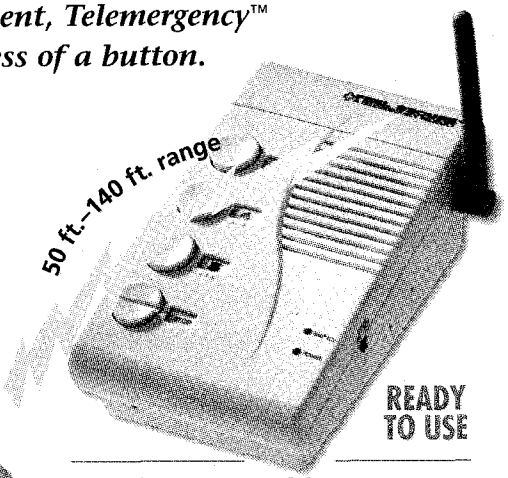

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has seen vociferous arguments between pro- and anti-American factions, Salih and I noticed a placard in English. LEAVE US, someone had painted in red; someone else had come along and crossed it out in a splash of blue. Your guess is as good...

Salih's own mixed opinions found another outlet; he was fond of taking reporters to the Abu Hanifa Mosque, an important shrine dedicated to one of the principal saints of Islam. It had been a center of support for the Baath Party and in fact was the last place Saddam Hussein appeared in public. I visited a number of mosques in Iraq; they are social as well as religious gathering places, especially for men, and students even come to them to study for exams. My wife, Alicia Anstead, writing for the *Bangor Daily News* in Maine, accompanied me to this mosque, which required some preparation. Salih took her to a clothing store and had her buy a long black dress; given that the thermometer that morning was 122 degrees Fahrenheit and rising, this amounted to a gender fine, but Alicia was willing to pay it. She also had to put on socks under her sandals and of course a *hijab*, or headscarf, that hooded her thoroughly.

In the cavernous hall that surrounds the mosque's sanctuary were the intricate designs of a faith that does not permit representations of the deity or of saints. On the columns, walls and ceilings every variation was present that I could imagine a line becoming—circles, squares, rhomboids, lines soaring, dipping, lines playing games with other lines, swirling, pointing, angling, sharp, soft, eight-pointed stars, winged lines, more shapes than I've ever seen. Lines and curves were raised to a level beyond mere art forms to unassailable facts of the universe. Carpets and prayer rugs were spread over the floors, their own designs of such a celestial nature that people I know would happily convert and pray the requisite five times a day to get these coverings into their living rooms.

I was permitted into the sanctuary while Alicia remained outside. This was similar to the hall but even more elaborately decorated with stars and geometric shapes on its columns and walls and in its vaulted arches and curved ceilings. The tomb of Abu Hanifa is the sanctuary's sacred altar.

In the hall before the service we were surrounded by boys and young men, who were curious and friendly. We asked them how they felt about Americans. They all spoke at the same time, but one voice, belonging to a student training to become an imam, was most authoritative. "We like you if you come as visitors and go back home," he said as Salih translated and smiled approvingly, "but we don't want you to stay as soldiers and run the country. Be our friends, not our occupiers." The young men parted to form a path as a courtly gentleman came up to us and, in impeccable English, introduced himself as the former minister of industry, retired since 1989. What did he think of the current situation? "Ah," he said, "ask the young lads here, we'll all give you the same answer." Salih nodded his own agreement as the former minister turned and passed into the sanctuary.

When he had completed his prayer service, the imam of Abu Hanifa, Sheik Mouyad Al-Adhami, sat with us on one of the prayer rugs. He is a vigorous, rocklike man in his early 40s, from a line of imams in a 600-year-old family that measures its descent from Mohammed himself. He had been more or less exiled from this mosque until the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, after which the former imam disappeared and Sheik Al-Adhami returned. I asked if Saddam had worshiped here regularly, and he said, "Saddam Hussein is the devil, and devils cannot worship." The imam has not seen one of his brothers for twenty-three years. "They made it a crime if your relative flees from Iraq," he said, "and my brother went to live in England. I was arrested and beaten, and after they let me go I remained under surveillance."

We asked the imam what he tells his congregation now. "I am trying to find a way to help them recover from psychological wounds brought on by the American war," he said. "There are other ways to change even this bloody regime, not through war. I have told high-ranking American officers we need security and settled conditions. The people need jobs. They feel the Americans are not serious and don't work for their betterment. The officers promise to do something, but we have seen nothing." As for the newly appointed governing council, the imam was skeptical. He did not feel it was truly representative of Iraqis. This seemed to be the moment to ask Sheik Al-Adhami, who is considered a moderate, whether politics and faith each have distinct places in the life of Iraqis. "Islam is not confined to the mosque," he said, "but is linked to economics, politics, every field of life. I tell my people, 'Do not store Islam in the mosque.' Some of those on the governing council want a separation of mosque and state. This is wrong and unacceptable. Iraqis do not want a secular regime. We will be questioned one day by God about all these matters of religion and politics. In Islam there is no right to separate policy from faith."

'Some of those on the governing council want a separation of mosque and state. This is wrong and unacceptable.' —Sheik Mouyad Al-Adhami

That seemed to invite no further clarification, so I asked what kind of government he would like to see. "We do not accept any dictatorship," he said, "any unjust group of men who want to impose principles on us or to limit our freedom. But there is a big difference between the Islamic idea of democracy and Western democracy. An election based on money and propaganda is wrong. We believe in controlled freedom, and freedom in the Western world is not controlled. The looting and burning that occurred here were accidents that happened because of unjust treatment and a lack of control. This is not the normal way of the Iraqi people. In Western society, crime is normal. Here it is an accident."

Are Islam and Western society destined, then, to be enemies? "The Almighty creates different societies in order to maintain life," said Sheik Al-Adhami, "and in the Koran all people are created as male and female. He who is good is closest to Allah. If the societies have bad will and are run by sick souls, they will clash with each other. If they have good will, they won't clash. It's simple."

This was surely a holy man of good will himself. But it was hard not to worry about power residing in true believers. Before leaving for Iraq I had gone to Washington, where I was briefed by a number of officials, including one at the State Department and one at a Defense Department think tank. To a man and woman, they all shook their heads at what one of them called our highly

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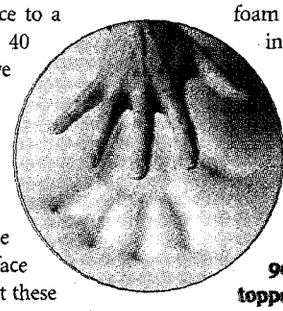

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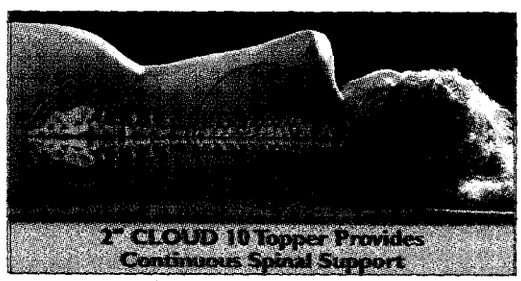

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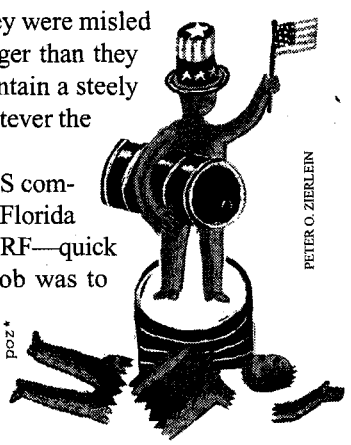
ideologized policies. We have our own true believers, and they currently have more power than ever before. If true believers come to power in Iraq, our two societies will have even less in common. Alicia and I decided to pursue the imam's social policies.

We asked Sheik Al-Adhami if a woman can be equal to a man in Islam. "Women in Islam are highly admired, autonomous, and a husband cannot interfere in his wife's property but must spend whatever he can on her to benefit her and satisfy her needs. She can become a doctor, an engineer, a teacher, whatever she wishes." This was protective, of course, but it did not add up to equality. The imam turned to Alicia, and though he didn't address her he seemed to be appraising her. Then he looked back at me and asked me how I like having Alicia all covered up. Before I could say, How do I know, she's barely visible, the imam answered his own question. "You like her better," he instructed. "You appreciate her more covered in this manner. This is how she should always be." I looked over at Alicia, wrapped and hooded, but for all I could tell she might have been Trent Lott and I wouldn't have known the difference.

Alicia asked why a woman has to be so completely covered. "To be covered gives a sign to all men," the imam said, "that they must be kind to women. There is no right for any man to enjoy a woman except only her husband. Women shouldn't be treated like animals and go around without cover." We let it go. It did appear, however, that the imam feels that men are so out of control they immediately turn predator if they see as much as an ankle of the opposite sex.

It was time to go, and I asked the imam if he had ever traveled abroad. "No, never," he said. Then he shook his head at himself, smiled, and added, "Well, yes, I went once to Syria, on my honeymoon." He smiled again. I said we were on our own honeymoon now in Baghdad. He raised his brows and looked from one of us to the other with a question mark. Really? Yes, just married. With a satisfied smile he congratulated us, and then he said, "You deserve each other." While we were left wondering how to take that, he chanted a verse from the Koran about Muslims doing no harm to non-Muslims. Then he looked up at us and said, "We will all meet in Paradise, all of us of different faiths." Not too soon, I hope.

American soldiers in Iraq are as differentiated as Iraqis. They believe firmly in their mission of pacifying an enemy people and bringing democracy to them, or they think they're wasting their time as peacekeepers, or they hate it and want to go home, or they grit their teeth and follow orders. Morale is mixed; some soldiers I met feel they were misled and have to stay in Iraq much longer than they were originally told, but others maintain a steely resolve to see the job through, whatever the job turns out to be.



Sweltering as they protected a US compound in Baghdad, two GIs from Florida said they came to Iraq as part of a QRF—quick reaction force—whose wartime job was to rescue downed pilots. What they do now is stand guard, day after day, wearing heavy flak jackets and helmets. Each is Latino and in the National Guard, one originally from Puerto Rico, the other from Mexico. Both are fathers. The Mexican is training to become a policeman, and the Puerto Rican drives a bus at Disney World. "The duty here is OK," the policeman said. "We've done what we came to do, took over the country. Mission-wise, we're done." Three men from their unit of 130 had recently been killed, and they were still thinking about that. "Ambushes, man," the bus driver said. "This country is not under control, and it never will be under control." His buddy took a swig of bottled water. "I guess I'm glad we came and did what we did," he said, "but a lot of the Iraqis, now, they have a big problem with us staying here because they want to take over their own country. Us staying here doesn't give them a chance to start anything, run anything on their own." I wondered if their not being Anglos possibly contributed to their understanding of how an occupied people feels, but other GIs were equally wary of being part of an occupation force.

Romeo and Juliet, almost. Dating between soldiers and the local population is forbidden not only for security reasons but because it is offensive to Muslims. When it happens it is furtive. A young Muslim woman—not Iraqi but a Lebanese import—who works for the US government in Baghdad was flat on her back on a couch, drying her eyes, the first time I met her. Her name is Randa and she told of her relationship with a GI named Jeff. Jeff's ambition to become a lawyer was diverted when he enlisted patriotically after 9/11. Stationed in Iraq, he met Randa. "We really bonded," Randa said. "We both loved debating, and we'd debate anything from a favorite ice cream flavor to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Jeff was an only child, and Jewish, and he said, 'Gee, Randa, you're the first Muslim I ever met in my whole life.' We kept exchanging books and magazines. I gave him a book on Islamic fundamentalism and told him to get up to chapter six by the next time I saw him, and he did it, so then we debated some more."

Randa and Jeff couldn't see each other often, but they e-mailed constantly, then met when they could after her office hours were over and he finished duty at Baghdad University. Randa said Jeff was so full of charisma, charm and intelligence that she was sure he'd become President of the United States. Jeff was shy, which increased his attractiveness to Randa. After two months they were very close. "We were both 23, and I really liked hanging out with him," Randa said. Then it ended. "It's so hot here, you know," Randa said, "and one day Jeff went into the cafeteria at Baghdad University for some ice cream. He came out and while he was walking down the steps of the building someone just came right up to him and shot him dead. As quick as that. I guess you could say I'm in mourning now." The next time I saw her Randa was busy again, plunging back into her work, which involves interviewing Iraqis, especially but not exclusively women, who have been mistreated. Recently she sent an e-mail. She still thinks about Jeff, still is certain he'd have become President. Her job continues, she finds it rewarding to help people, and she likes her colleagues. "I'm doing much better," Randa wrote, "taking it one day at a time."

How about the arts? A theater director came to see me several times. Rasim Mansour, a long-faced man with a severe yet quizzical expression, manages to look like both James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. He seemed to want nothing more than a conversation, and he was fresh from a postwar triumph, his presentation of *Desire*

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Under the Elms, which he said was a smash hit in Baghdad and had just closed. Beneath his black-framed round glasses, his eyes flashed as he explained that O'Neill's play is close to Iraq's situation now because a cruel father—i.e., Saddam Hussein—had doomed his entire family—in this case his country—to tragedy. He also admired Arthur Miller, who he felt had joined Eugene O'Neill in communicating American civilization to the world.

Rasim, now 32, made his start in the theater by playing Macbeth, for which he was praised so much he began to receive grants and commissions to direct plays. Chain-smoking very long cigarettes, Rasim said his Macbeth, even though it deals with a usurping king, slipped by Saddam Husein's censors, but many other plays, such as *Caligula* and *Richard III*, did not. "Our second most important export, right after oil," Rasim said, "became our artists and intellectuals. I wouldn't leave because I felt my country needed me to stay here, and good or bad I love it." The censorship is gone now, he said, but half the theaters in Baghdad are destroyed while the other half are used by Americans for storage. The O'Neill play had been presented in a borrowed auditorium. "An American captain told me, 'Kiss my ass,' when I asked if we could have a theater. I'm glad Americans got rid of Saddam, but conquering us was not a good idea. Americans have harmed this country, and traces of the occupation will remain a long time. You never thought how to save Iraq, only how to conquer it in order to terrorize and warn the entire world. I can't believe that four months after they won the war they have still not restored basic services like electricity and water. So who's worse, Saddam or the Americans? I'm a great fan of George W. Bush as an actor and I hope he'll be performing in a theater one day very soon."

At the Polytechnic Institute in Baghdad, I felt I was on a campus that had substituted rage for electricity as its power source. By now my translator and guide was Sa'ad Al-Izzi, a tall, stout man of 29, though he seemed older due to his having had to mature quickly at the age of 10 in order to take care of his mother and sister after his father died of diabetes. Izzi, an English major himself, was appalled at the condition of the institute, which he had not visited since the war began. The custodian of buildings and grounds, who lives in a house just inside the college gates, displayed a broken tooth he said he'd received while defending the institute against a gang of looters that included Kuwaitis, Syrians and Palestinians. He brought out his 4-year-old daughter and 8-year-old son; the daughter had shrapnel in one of her eyes, the son had shrapnel in his head, both from wild firing, the custodian said, by US troops. The soldiers, he said, fired a few times into the grounds of the institute but otherwise simply watched from their tanks across the street while the college was looted and burned. Becoming angrier as he spoke, the custodian said Americans had refused him the money to pay for an operation to restore his daughter's eyesight.

A professor of computer science told Izzi the vandals had burned every book in the library, which he said had been the largest scientific collection in the Middle East. The gutted and hollowed library is now being used as a cafeteria because the cafeteria itself was burned to the ground. Two women professors—of geography and mechanical engineering—very politely said they hoped Americans would stay until there is a secure and

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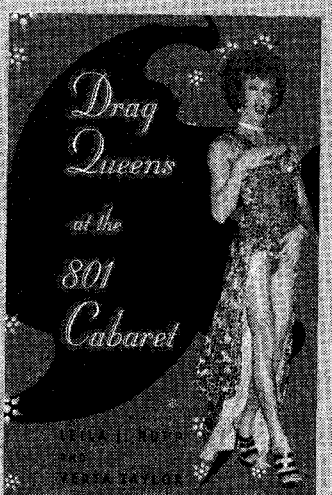

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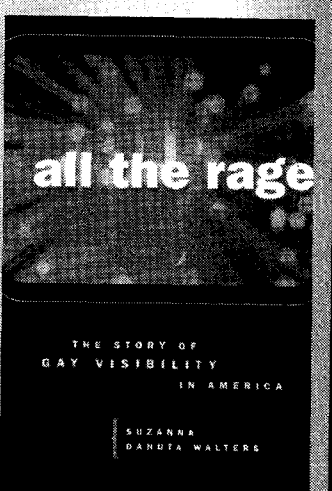

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stable government. An older student, who said he is in his 30s, agreed with the women professors and said most Iraqis want Americans to stay for now.

Anger resurfaced when we went inside the former library, where the students were eating lunch. Izzi and I were surrounded by students who pushed toward us with complaints. Civil servants haven't been paid; some of their professors have been months without salary; how dare Paul Bremer, the American administrator, not come to see us; we don't want the Baathists back but right now nothing's working; if Bremer won't listen to us he's the second Saddam; I demand to see Bremer, this is my right; Bremer is the new thief of Baghdad; since Americans have the most power and money in the world, they can at least buy us some books. Bringing up the rear, two women students were more soft-spoken but determined to be heard. "It's so unsafe for a woman or a girl to go about now," said one. "Before, we couldn't talk freely but we could walk," said the other, "and now we can talk freely but we can't walk."

'Before, we couldn't talk freely but we could walk, and now we can talk freely but we can't walk.' —A female university student

By the time Izzi and I were back outside, a crowd of students were shouting at us. "Americans are here for oil, nothing else!" "The oil ministry is secure for the Americans, fuck the rest of the country!" "I hate Americans because they're free and I'm not!" "My friend brought his pregnant wife to the hospital, but before they got there they were stopped at an American checkpoint where the soldiers shot him. Who will be the father of his baby?" "Basra is secure under the British, why not Baghdad under the Americans?" "Bush is a liar!" "He promises and does nothing!" "Go tell the American people what happens here so they can hate Bush the way we hate Bush and we hate Saddam!"

I was beginning to think about Randa's friend Jeff who was shot on the other campus. Izzi himself looked concerned, and though he is a rapid translator he couldn't keep up with the epithets and oaths being thrown at us. "Can't you stupid Americans understand what you've done here!" a student yelled, and we left quickly.

"That's the thing," Izzi told me as we drove off. "You don't know when you're in danger and when you're safe." This had also been true for Izzi himself under Saddam Hussein, when one of his jobs had been to translate movies for Saddam and his son Uday. Saddam's favorite movie was *Braveheart*, and he claimed that if he had an enemy like the Mel Gibson character he would never kill that man but would keep him around for his valor. Uday's own favorite film was *Gladiator*. The brutal prince loved to see arms and legs and heads go flying, and essentially used the movie as an instructional video for his assassins and torturers. When one movie Izzi translated had a ten-second audio dropout, Uday sent his men to the film office where Izzi worked; Izzi's boss said the translator was out, which wasn't true, and took the beating himself on behalf of Izzi. What worried Izzi now, in addition to the safety of journalists he translated for, was that armed insurgents were beginning to pick off Iraqis just for working with Americans.

One evening, when our confinement in the hotel was beginning to seem as unnecessary as it was claustrophobic, Alicia and I asked Izzi and our driver, a former Iraqi Air Force jet pilot named Abu Mustafa, to drop us at an Internet cafe. We told them to go on home, and we'd take a taxi after we used the Internet. Abu Mustafa, whose antennae were particularly sensitive, said he didn't think it was a wonderful idea. Izzi thought it would be all right, as there were a lot of cabs going up and down the wide street we were on in what he said was a relatively placid neighborhood.

The proprietor of the Internet cafe was the sort of man who runs the candy store in one of those movies they release around Halloween; you don't know if he wants to help you or turn you over to Stephen King. We were unable to send or receive messages on his computers, and we left quickly while it was not yet fully dark. The street was reassuringly busy; Baghdad at night is both lively and deadly. Getting a taxi was easy, although the taxi itself had a desperately sick engine. The driver spoke a little English and said he knew where our hotel was. He didn't, and he had a swimming eyeball. As his taxi lurched forward around an altogether unfamiliar neighborhood, taking turns we knew were wrong, the cabbie asked if we were Europeans. No, Alicia said. Canadians, I said. We were getting nervous but we couldn't clutch one another's hands because we'd been told it was unacceptable for men and women to touch in public. The driver, groping around for our hotel on streets we didn't recognize, asked if we had children. Alicia said we had a 15-year-old. Boy or girl? the cabbie asked. Alicia said boy at the same instant I said girl. That was the only night we disobeyed the rules.

Americans working for the government, despite inconveniences and delays, seemed upbeat. "The state of human rights here is improving every day," said Sandra Hodgkinson, a lawyer in the office of human rights and transitional justice. "For over twenty years people couldn't express a view. Now they can speak, write, march, demonstrate." Her husband, David, also a lawyer, is a senior adviser on transitional rights, and the couple are involved variously with torture victims, helping Iraqis recover property, and reintegrating former political prisoners into society. Sandra became a member of Amnesty International while she was still in high school, and David is an idealist about their work. "What we do," he said, "is so much more interesting and exciting than the big money on tax issues or corporate mergers." The couple, in their early 30s, are the kind of optimists and loyalists who can't wait to get to work in the morning. When I asked them to compare Jay Garner, the first postwar administrator, with his successor, Paul Bremer, Sandra fairly bounced. "Garner got us working together in Kuwait," she said, "and Bremer got us all up and running in the governing phase after we arrived here. All I've seen is two great bosses." A team needs team players. This is the kind of enthusiasm that moved mountains in postwar Europe and Japan.

To the victor. Saddam Hussein's opulent Republican Palace, which still displays four massive sculpted heads of the dictator, is now the American headquarters as well as Bremer's office, reinforcing Iraqi suspicions that the new governing authority is not a different form of leadership but simply a replacement of the old. As Izzi and I approached the throne room, which he had never seen before, he told me Iraqis had been known to vomit or even

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faint when they were summoned here. They did not know whether Saddam was about to reward or behead them, and he liked to keep them guessing. The throne room is now used as a chapel for the US military. Inside the vast chamber, just above one of the gold thrones, is a mural of SCUD missiles soaring skyward either toward an opposite mural of Jerusalem or possibly toward the other Republican Palace 8,000 miles away. Three chaplains—one each from the Army, Navy and Air Force—took turns posing with a long, shiny ceremonial sword that had belonged to Saddam Hussein. The Air Force chaplain clapped one of Saddam's Gothic World War I helmets on his head and sat on the throne with the sword while the Navy chaplain photographed him. When I approached the Air Force chaplain he put his hand over the name plate on his uniform and turned away. The victors have the spoils but may not want you to know exactly who they are.

One American I met at the Republican Palace is, if anything, even more cheerful about the occupation's prospects than the Hodgkinsons. Steven Connolly works for a private firm contracted to USAID, renovating such facilities as fire stations, clinics and elementary schools. A veteran of the Peace Corps in Africa, Connolly has lived abroad most of his adult life and has already hired more than a thousand Iraqis for his current projects. "The reason the electricity is still not fully on in Baghdad," he said, "is not because Americans aren't paying attention. It's years of neglect compounded by sabotage. Fifty thousand Baathists out there are trying to wreak havoc." Connolly is fully supportive of the war itself—"Saddam Hussein had a repressive regime, he wanted any weapon he could acquire and he had a history of using whatever he could get his hands on"—as well as the aftermath. "We're off to a good start," he said, "but we need replication a thousandfold. The big players are coming in, Bechtel and the others. Now we'll see some real progress."

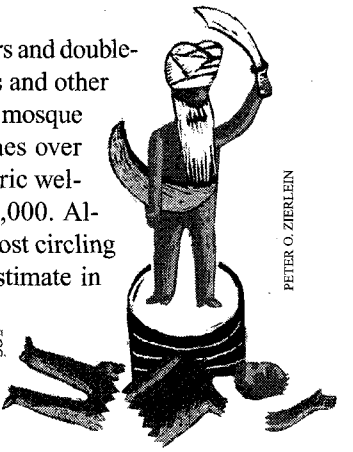
On the other hand.

The following day an imam, who looked like Christ if he'd lived to be 50, told me solemnly he believes that Iraqis killed under the American occupation are several times more numerous already than under Saddam Hussein. "Saddam was a terrorist," he said, "but Bush is also a terrorist. We demand the Americans withdraw immediately." Like Sheik Al-Adhami, he said Islam specifically rejects any separation of religion and politics. "Shia and Sunni are united as sons of this land in opposing the crime you committed with your decision to come here." The imam urged me, as an American visiting his country, to go to the Mother of All Battles Mosque to see how Iraqis feel.

On the way to the Mother of All Battles Mosque I had to stop at a hotel that is entirely rented to ABC News. A producer there told me the network had just taken a year's lease on a smaller hotel, indicating they're in this, like our government, for the long haul. I wondered what the Iraqis would think about our attention to them, and whether the attention would last a year or fade, as it has in Afghanistan.

The Mother of All Battles Mosque, which was built by Saddam and has minarets shaped like weapons, was the scene of the largest demonstration I saw in Iraq. The demonstration was peaceful, but it was also passionate. "This is a special day," an intense man with a black beard said to me as crowds flocked toward the mosque, "because we are here to resist the occupation." Many of the men wore white skullcaps and long white robes, *dishdashas*, and the women were either scarved and covered or in the full *abaya*, a black nunlike garb. Alicia asked a small group of women why they had come, but she was answered by a man. "We're here to resist you, and if you won't listen in your democratic way to our wish that you leave, we'll make you listen in another way."

Two Humvees rolled by with soldiers standing manning their guns. I thought they were on the wrong road at the wrong time, either accidentally or provocatively. But no one showed the slightest interest in them, and the Humvees kept right on rolling.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The crowd, which had arrived in cars and double-decker buses from homes, businesses and other mosques, sat around the outside of the mosque in blistering heat to listen to speeches over booming loudspeakers. The first cleric welcomed a throng he estimated at 20,000. Although the attendance was large, almost circling the mosque itself, I'd have cut his estimate in half. We were not in the section reserved for the press and television trucks, but it was well placed to view both crowd and speakers; the White House media team may have an opposite number among the mosques in Baghdad. The next cleric said it was unacceptable for the governing council to declare April 9—the day Baghdad fell to the Americans—a national holiday because it was a day of disaster for Iraq and Islam.

Speaker after speaker alternated religious chants with exhortations to resist the American occupation. There was special condemnation of the sweeps conducted by US forces. "The invaders are false, and when they make their raids on our homes they spread their destruction and corruption everywhere," an imam said. "They should save their blood and their money and go home. Shia or Sunni, we don't care, but whoever governs us must be an Arab." Loud cheers interrupted him. "The UN Security Council does not deny the right of resistance to occupiers. It is the right of Iraqis to fight the American and British invaders." One of the imams emphasized national reconciliation. "Do not be vengeful toward the Baathists," he said, "but instead let the courts do their work. We must not let the occupation be an excuse for revenge. The occupation will end, a weak shadow never lasts."

A speaker sounding like a cheerleader at a political rally yelled out "NO TO ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIVISION, YES TO THE LIBERATION OF IRAQ!" The crowd responded with "YES!" I wandered among the demonstrators and saw that many were praying or fingering their prayer beads at the same time as they were responding to the speakers. There was no division, as the imams had told me, between their politics and their faith. A particularly impassioned sheik focused on women and Iraqis working with the Americans. "The occupier humiliates and searches women. A man should sacrifice himself so no one puts a hand on his woman. And you translator agents who work with the occupier, you should know we can issue a fatwa on whoever works with the Americans and you will

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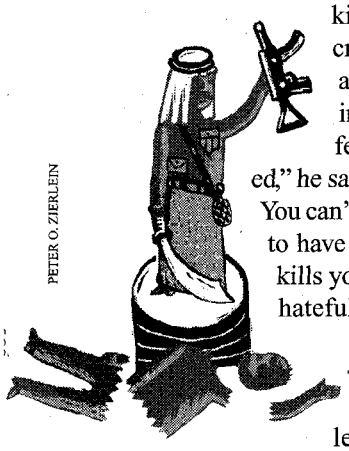
be killed. We prefer to negotiate, to restrain our anger, but when a man restrains his anger a long time and then releases it, the result will be overwhelming." (This imam had read his Freud along with his Koran that morning.) "Now we are only speaking, but if the occupier keeps on provoking us, we will use the other option."

Before we had entered the mosque grounds, Abu Mustafa told us, in a rare burst of English, "If what anything happens, you come quick to my car." Izzi thought the moment had arrived after the last speaker as the crowd began surging toward the buses and cars. "It's not that anyone is necessarily violent," he said, "but when a demonstration ends things can happen."

When we were back in Abu Mustafa's car, Izzi said the speakers we had heard were only moderates. I asked what was his definition of a moderate. "The moderates say it's your duty to resist the occupation," he said. "The extremists come right out and say kill the infidel. Now." Izzi believed the crowd at the mosque represented only a minority of Iraqis, but it was a growing minority. I asked how he himself felt. "No one wants his country invaded," he said, "but imagine if you had leukemia. You can't get rid of it with surgery, so you have to have chemotherapy, which is hateful and kills your immune system and is even more hateful because it makes you ugly. But it keeps you alive. Once it's over and you're recovered, though, you don't want any more chemo. Saddam was leukemia. Iraq looks ugly after the American chemo, which makes us weak and vulnerable to other diseases, yet the chemo was needed to keep us going and give us a chance. Now the US occupation is a chemo we don't want." Did that mean Izzi was ready for the Americans to leave? "Actually, no," he said. "You created this mess. You put the mud in the muddle we now have. You have to clean this up before you leave."



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

But don't expect thanks. When I was in the Middle East the first time, in Egypt in early 1958, the streets of Cairo were thronged with revelers rejoicing in the proclamation of the United Arab Republic formed by Egypt and Syria. The force behind the merger was Egypt's president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was hoping to initiate an expanded Greater Arabia that could defy the West and be the scourge of Israel. Because President Eisenhower had prevented Great Britain, France and Israel from reversing Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal two years earlier, Americans were greeted in a very friendly manner. An Egyptian at the Pyramids told me the United States was pretty good, then added, unforgettably, "I hate the British and French like I love my eyes." Nearby was an American from the Ford Foundation, who was in Egypt to teach scientific farming methods that would allow Egyptian cotton and other crops to compete successfully on the world market because they would be grown so much more efficiently. I said I guessed that between Eisenhower's intervention on Egypt's behalf and the work of people like himself, Egyptians must really like Americans. "I think you'll find," said the agricultural specialist, who had been working abroad since the end of World War II, "that gratitude is a difficult emotion to bear for very long. After a while, it turns to resentment."

The larger point from the United Arab Republic, which was shortly joined—or rivaled—by Jordan and Iraq, forming the Arab Union, is that the vision of pan-Arabism in 1958 remained just that. Arab nationalism, which looked to me both hopeful and frightening when I watched it celebrating itself in Cairo, stumbled over disagreements, contending interests and tribal vendettas going back centuries. Both earlier and later attempts to coalesce the Arab world have ended ingloriously, abetted by Western ruses, with the vision remaining a rainbow. In Iraq, despite feuds between sects, factions and tribes, pan-Arabism has so far not competed successfully with the resolute nationalism expressed in every province, even in the north by the Kurds.

The Jewish question. At a significant number of stops along my journey Jews and Israel were identified as major problems. Jews were once estimated to constitute almost 20 percent of Baghdad; they've been gone for decades. Iraqis have worked for the cause of Palestine since the 1930s, when they tried to mediate between the Arabs, the British authorities and what was then the Jewish Agency. In the 1948 war that followed the establishment of Israel, and in the Six Day War of 1967, Iraq fought somewhat desultorily against Israel's existence. What I found this summer was something like an article of faith that Israel equals belligerent Zionism equals Jews.

At the Polytechnic Institute, a student had identified his own fury at the governing council as rooted in one member who had done business with the Israelis. "Can you imagine that," he yelled, "dealing with Israelis? Shaking hands with Jews!" He almost spat out his words. One day while I was at the American headquarters, I was told that extremists in a Toyota Land Cruiser had fired a volley of bullets into the lobby of a Baghdad hotel because they heard Jews were staying there, which was untrue. The imam who looked like Christ at 50 had warned his congregation that Jews were buying up houses in the neighborhood. He complained that the American authorities had summoned and questioned him for doing this. I asked what evidence he had that Jews were investing in Baghdad real estate. "It's only a rumor," he said, "but I felt it was my duty to pass it along. The Americans say they're staying for five years, and if that's accurate then Iraq will be transformed into a second Palestine."

"Never forget the Palestinians!" one of the speakers at the Mother of All Battles Mosque had commanded. "As soon as the roads are open we will go to fight in Palestine to support the Palestinians as part of our jihad!" Another imam led the crowd in a chant: "OH JEWS, OH JEWS, THE ARMY OF MOHAMMED WILL BE BACK!" He followed the chant by intoning prayerfully, "God condemns Zionism. We will make no other decision but jihad."

Rasim Mansour, the theater director who had scored his first success playing Macbeth, maintained that *Desire Under the Elms* achieved a fuller meaning because O'Neill wrote the play about a Jewish family destroyed by its corrupt, aggressive patriarch. I pointed out that the families in the play are the Cabots and Putnams, venerable New England names, anything but Jewish. Rasim held his ground. "No," he said, "this shows what O'Neill thought of Jews and it is also our opinion as Arabs." I reminded Rasim that his other American playwright hero, Arthur Miller, is Jewish. "Yes, it's possible," he said, "but Miller knows the American soul. I'm not against Jews but against some of the Jewish ideas."

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What might those be?

You can imagine my surprise when Rasim said the Jewish ideas he doesn't like have to do with money. "Thanks to Israel the American movie industry is great and rich, and movies are mostly in the hands of Jews," he said. "Hollywood is very advanced technically, but I admire the Italian movies more because they have real ideas. *Titanic* is all the Americans can do well. Spielberg is a Jew and he gives his money to Israel. He's the model for American movies, and he's a good model but he bears Jewish ideals. Why didn't American movies find a place for Orson Welles to work? He only got to make *Citizen Kane* and afterward he was banned because he didn't adopt the ideas of the Jews." (Somehow it didn't seem worth pointing out that the original screenplay for *Citizen Kane* was written by a Jew, Herman Mankiewicz.) "Yes," he went on, "it's true the blacklist happened to some Jews as well, but eventually Hollywood adopted Jewish ideas, the main one of which is to run after what is profitable."

An imperial errand by a hyperpower with our dominion is not so hard to begin, not so easy to complete.

I asked whether, as a creative person himself, he admires other artistic Jews besides Arthur Miller. "Oh yes," he said, one of my favorite poets is a Jew." He paused, and I wondered who this educated and well-read man was going to name. "Ezra Pound," he said. For the first and only time in Iraq I found myself yelling, "NO, EZRA POUND WAS NOT A JEW! IN FACT, HE HATED JEWS SO MUCH HE MADE BROADCASTS FOR OUR ENEMY DURING WORLD WAR II AND WAS ARRESTED FOR TREASON AFTERWARD. HE WAS NOT A JEW, RASIM, PLEASE!"

Rasim remained admirably calm. "No, no," he said benignly, "Ezra Pound was a Jew." He smiled. "And a very talented one, too." It occurred to me that when Rasim was having his triumph as Macbeth, perhaps Macduff, just for one performance, could have used a real sword. Rasim is not an Iraqi everyman but neither is he atypical. A high level of culture and education exists in Iraq, along with a persistent strain of tribal superstition, and sometimes these can both be found in the same person.

The point is not that Iraqis are about to mount a pogrom or march on Jerusalem. The point is that anti-Jewish feelings, as well as rhetoric, constitute a theme, religiously and politically, in the life of countless Iraqis. I was told that the killer of Randa's friend Jeff undoubtedly received a bonus when it was revealed that Jeff was Jewish. The Bush Administration has its hands full if it proposes to construct an Iraq that accepts Israel, that can distinguish between Jews and a Jewish state, that can regard a Jew as an individual and not as an embodiment of evil motives. Unlike the other tasks of the occupation, this will not be a reconstruction; it will be an original piece of architecture. The dream of US policy-makers that they can use Iraq as a talisman to bewitch the rest of the Middle East into embracing democracy and Israel may prove as illusory as the Arabs' own quest for regional unity.

Our imperial errand is not so hard to begin, not so easy to complete. We conquistadors currently have a government for whom the dollar is a communion wafer. How much of a surprise is it, then, that we hope to make Iraqis buy everything from education to medical care? If we won't provide these at home, can we really be expected to give them to a vanquished enemy? And then there is the resistance. Each day the bulletin board at US headquarters lists coalition accomplishments—new schools in session, police academy graduations, a clinic reopened. Casualties are also noted—one soldier killed, ten injured, for two days no casualties, then five soldiers killed. With postcombat American deaths surpassing those of the invasion itself, we might ask, What is the acceptable balance among these statistics?

In a sleight of hand faster than the eye can see, combined with an Alphonse-Gaston routine, a US official answers a question about what is going on by telling you to ask the Iraqi governing council, it's their country. Go to the governing council for the answer, and they say the Americans are in charge, ask them. They are both accurate, both insincere. This gives the press the opportunity to cover events staged either by the coalition or the resisters, which allows a pessimist to conclude everything is a mess while the optimist can say it's all going according to plan. The fundamental US public-relations effort is driven not by accurate information but by political doctrine. Eventually, whether we condemn or support the occupation, we look at it through a moral lens, but the lens is ground, and grounded, in America. Iraqis, with their own lens, will never see the same view.

Forget the Bremer operation for a moment: He's doing a good job or a poor job, he has good people with him and they're struggling, or he has self-interested bureaucrats who want to award contracts and then catch on with their clients like Kellogg Brown & Root or Bechtel once the initial phase of the occupation is over. The uglier fact jumping up to be seen and heard is that we are two vitally separate kinds of societies. What the majority of Iraqis I spoke with (of both genders) want to do with women should not happen, in our view, to any human being. Conversely, the society we want to make Iraqis fit into never worked with groups as disparate as Native Americans and Vietnamese, so what makes us think it will work in Iraq?

Japan and Germany are what make us think that. Both of them are, however, homogeneous societies with rich histories of organization, and the main thing we had to do was shift that organization. In both cases it took seven years, but we were able to do it because they were rigorously structured in the first place. Crucially, we had beaten them in long wars that utterly sapped their will to resist, and in the case of one of them we had dropped, in the space of seventy-two hours, two bombs that took the lives of more than 200,000 people, almost all civilians. "Collateral damage" be damned; the civilians were the point. In the case of the other, it was the second time in three decades they had fought, and lost, a major war. No more fight left in those dogs. The army of Iraq mostly did not fight at all, and it assuredly did not surrender.

Iraq today is unarmed, but it is hardly unarmed. Many thousands of former soldiers are out there still, angry young men without jobs or purpose, and you feel this wherever you go in Iraq. They will choose when, where, and whom to attack. In addition, Islamic fundamentalists are coming—a trickle? a stream? who knows?—through the sieve of Iraq's borders from all over Arabia to fight the infidel. In August the insurgency struck down the

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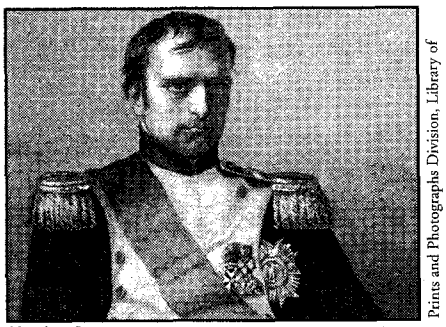

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Napoleon I.

And in a third lifetime: the world plunged into economic depression, global war and genocide; Europe abandoned its African colonies; the Soviet Union rose and fell; Democracy was challenged by fascism and communism and then became the dominant form of government; and the same powers that had bled each other for hundreds of years created a Common Market and unified currency.

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valiant peacemaker Sergio Vieira de Mello along with at least twenty-two others at UN headquarters in Baghdad. "It just breaks my heart and leaves me so angry," a UN colleague of Vieira de Mello's e-mailed me, "at the arrogance and stupidity of US policy that has created such a muck-up and ruined the lives of so many innocents in the process." Vieira de Mello, who could have been a worthy successor to Kofi Annan, instead became a victim of holy rage stoked by the vanity of a US President who invites violence with his swaggering "bring 'em on" challenge to militants.

One afternoon in US headquarters, at a sparsely attended press conference, an American official from somewhere in the hierarchy's mid-range was announcing the appointment of a number of Iraqi bureaucrats to positions in the police and fire departments of Baghdad, as well as to chairmanships of district and neighborhood councils. Since the event was not considered important enough to warrant the presence of a translator, and since the appointees of course knew what their new jobs were, they simply sat and looked up appreciatively at the speaker they did not understand. "The power," the American official concluded truthfully, "has just now shifted back to the Iraqis." ■

BUSH'S 'COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATISM' IS A DEFT—AND DISHONEST—STRATEGY.

Where's the Compassion?

JOE CONASON

"I am a fiscal conservative and a family conservative. And I am a compassionate conservative, because I know my philosophy is optimistic and full of hope for every American." So George W. Bush described himself and his beliefs on the eve of his first campaign for President. With that speech, the Texas governor hoped to finesse a paradox of national politics. To win the nomination of the Republican Party, he had to be acceptable to every kind of conservative, from the libertarian to the fundamentalist; to win the presidency itself, he also had to embody an alternative to the angry conservatism that Americans had found increasingly repellent during the Clinton years.

RYAN INZANA

Moderate, suburban voters were alienated by the partisanship, self-righteous hypocrisy and antigovernment extremism of Newt Gingrich's Republican "revolutionaries." By 1999 the House Speaker's colleagues had immolated him, but his brief tenure and the impeachment fiasco he sponsored left behind a cloud of acrid smoke.

Bush and his political adviser Karl Rove knew that he could ill afford his father's mistake of alienating the far right. At the same time, they knew he had to avoid being isolated politically on the right. "Compassionate conservatism" was their answer. So deft was this gambit that it left journalists gawking and scratching their heads, as if they had witnessed the candidate literally running in two directions at once.

During the election year to come, Bush and Rove will renew the "compassionate conservatism" theme to draw independent, female and minority voters, balancing the appeal of a "wartime presidency" that is already beginning to lose its luster. The President recently returned to emphasizing buzzwords like "inclusive, positive and hopeful" in a June speech to the Urban League.

Indeed, "compassion" is a featured topic on the new website put up by Bush-Cheney '04 (www.georgewbush.com), where "news" about the President's agenda of compassion includes highlights like "President stresses importance of health and fitness." The need for such filler reflects how thin the Administration's portfolio for the poor remains. The site's most noticeable feature is a "compassion photo album" consisting almost entirely of photos of the smiling Bush with smiling black children. This is almost identical to the public-relations material Bush and his advisers rolled out during the 2000 campaign (and the minstrel-show GOP convention in Philadelphia), repackaged to remind voters that he is, or purports to be, a "different kind of Republican."

Distinguishing son from father was a process that began during George W.'s second gubernatorial campaign in 1998, with a massive wave of television advertising created by Mark McKinnon, formerly a top Democratic consultant in Austin. McKinnon honestly believed that George W. Bush was a "different kind of Republican," a bipartisan leader who cared about the poor, and that belief showed in his advertising. Later, McKinnon, Rove and other advisers developed the same themes into a more sophisticated strategy that drew from the two most successful politicians of the postwar era, Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan.

From Reagan, the Bush advisers borrowed the friendly optimism, the down-home cowboy boots and the lavishly produced Morning in America style of advertising, which they retitled "Fresh Start." (If that sounded like a breakfast cereal or deodorant, it was entirely appropriate.) From Clinton, they adopted the supple tactics of repositioning their rhetoric toward the center and rephrasing issues to neutralize any partisan disadvantage.

This wasn't the first time, of course, that attractive branding had sold the nation a phony product. After two years of skewed tax cuts, destructive deregulation and social regression, nobody doubts Bush's conservatism. But where's the compassion?

To paraphrase a famous man, it depends on what the meaning of that word is.

Americans normally understand compassion to mean caring for the ill, homeless, hungry, unemployed, destitute and defense-

This article is adapted from Big Lies: The Right-Wing Propaganda Machine and How It Distorts the Truth *(St. Martin's Press).*

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less. "Compassionate" softens "conservative," a word that tends to be associated with smug stinginess rather than benevolence or mercy. "Compassionate conservative" acknowledges that unfortunate stereotype, indicating a person of right-wing inclination who nevertheless feels an obligation to lift up the downtrodden. In the modern context, the term also suggests acceptance of government responsibility—since private charity has never been sufficient to relieve social distress.

But the ideological authors of Bush's "philosophy" have devised their own definition of compassionate conservatism. The phrase itself usually refers to the policy prescriptions of Marvin Olasky, a professor of journalism at the University of Texas who also publishes *World*, an ultraconservative, fundamentalist-Christian newsweekly. With the assistance of the Heritage Foundation and other think tanks on the right, Olasky has written three books extolling religious charity as a moral alternative to the sinful welfare state.

In early 1996, Newt Gingrich wrote a gushing introduction to Olasky's book *Renewing American Compassion*. Four years later, Bush contributed the foreword to Olasky's next volume, *Compassionate Conservatism: What It Is, What It Does, and How It Can Transform America*. *Christian Century*'s reviewer called it "less a book than an advertisement for Bush's presidential campaign." Although Bush used rhetoric about compassion to distance himself publicly from Gingrich, their overlapping relationships with Olasky showed how little ideological space really existed between them. Both had endorsed the rebranding of conservatism with a human face. Both had done favors for this idea's "godfather" and accepted favors from him. Both were determined to dismantle the programs of the New Deal and the Great Society, from Social Security to Medicare.

Bush's and Gingrich's overlapping relationships with Marvin Olasky show how little ideological space really exists between them.

But Gingrich couldn't redecorate his threatening image in comforting pastels. He wasn't sufficiently nimble to move in two directions at once. Bush, having entered the national consciousness as an unknown figure marked only by his father's famous name, had no need to remake a damaged image. He rolled himself out as the "conservative with a heart," and profited by contrasting himself with the disgraced former Speaker. And if Bush's differences with Gingrich were a pretense—as they surely were—that easy deception only reflected the more profound dishonesty of the "compassion" strategy.

Now, after observing Bush's first few years in the Oval Office, we have a clearer understanding of what his words meant on that auspicious day in New Hampshire. Being a "fiscal conservative" meant passing lopsided tax cuts for the wealthy few and leaving the federal budget in deficit for the foreseeable future. Being a "family conservative" meant looking after certain families, particularly if their annual incomes are higher than $200,000 and their estates are valued at more than $2 million. And so far, being a "compassionate conservative" appears to mean nothing very different from being a hardhearted, stingy, old-fashioned conservative.

Bush's budgets prove that he still emphatically prefers cutting the taxes of wealthy individuals and corporations to maintaining living standards for poor and working-class families. States and localities, their economies soured and their budgets overstrained, are unable to maintain services for their neediest citizens. Food deliveries to many of the helpless elderly will end. Nearly a million Americans are losing their Medicaid benefits in what the National Governors Association describes as "the worst fiscal crisis since World War II." For the first time in a decade, the rate of poverty is rising again, with 1.3 million Americans falling below the poverty line in 2001.

The most vigorous response of the Bush White House to these grim prospects is to propose abolishing "double taxation" of stock dividends. "That is very much pro-poor," according to R. Glenn Hubbard, the former chairman of Bush's Council of Economic Advisers, even though the poor won't get any of the benefits.

While he is fighting to allow the highest income class to pay nothing on investment earnings, he is tightening the requirements for those who seek the earned-income tax credit—meaning the working poor. Essentially a refund of a portion of regressive payroll taxes paid by low-income workers, the EITC is one of the most successful government initiatives directed toward Americans who work full-time but cannot earn enough to keep their families above the poverty line. In 1999, at the zenith of his compassionate phase, Bush stood up as a defender of the EITC against Congressional Republicans who were trying to reduce it. He quite rightly denounced the scheme pushed by his fellow Texan Tom DeLay, a professing Christian, as an attempt to balance the federal budget "on the backs of the poor." But having since legislated mammoth tax cuts for the wealthy and run up a record deficit, Bush won't defend EITC from conservatives in the White House and Congress who are seeking to cut it, eliminate the funds that help workers apply for it, impose harsher audits on families that claim it—or even eliminate it.

Originally, the twin centerpieces of Bush's compassionate conservatism were his education plan, "No Child Left Behind," and his "faith-based initiative" to direct federal funds toward private charities, including religious institutions. Owing to the deficits caused by the recession and his tax cuts, however, the education bill he negotiated with Senator Edward Kennedy fell far short of the funding he had originally promised. Although his budget proposal increased education spending, the proposed rise was the lowest in several years. He cut a billion dollars from programs specified in his own bill. One statistic summed up Bush's priorities: His tax cuts for the rich amounted to more than fifty times the total amount he requested for new education spending.

Bush's vaunted "faith-based initiative" met an even more disgraceful fate. In the winter of 2002, Bush got a lump of coal in his Christmas stocking from John DiIulio, the former director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. The University of Pennsylvania professor is probably the leading neoconservative exponent of compassionate conservatism. As a devout Catholic and lifelong Democrat, he didn't share Marvin Olasky's religious or social views, but he joined the Republican Administration because he hoped

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to create innovative programs to assist the poor.

In a devastating, emotional seven-page letter quoted by journalist Ron Suskind in *Esquire* magazine, DiIulio depicted a White House dominated by partisan cynicism and devoid of competent policy-makers. Karl Rove and his aides dominated every discussion of domestic issues, always emphasizing media and political strategy at the expense of substance and analysis. DiIulio told Suskind that when he objected to a proposal to kill the earned-income tax credit, he suddenly realized that he was arguing with libertarians who understood little about the workings of government and had no interest in learning.

"There is no precedent in any modern White House for what is going on in this one: a complete lack of a policy apparatus," he said. "What you've got is everything—and I mean everything—being run by the political arm. It's the reign of the Mayberry Machiavellis." That was DiIulio's nickname for Karl Rove and his aides, "who consistently talked and acted as if the height of political sophistication consisted in reducing every issue to its simplest black-and-white terms for public consumption, then steering legislative initiatives or policy proposals as far right as possible."

The result is that the President's "faith-based initiative" has been transformed into a patronage operation. During the 2002 midterm-election campaign, Administration officials suddenly showed up at inner-city churches, seeking to entice African-American ministers with federal funding. A half-million-dollar grant was quickly slated for Pat Robertson's quasi-charitable Operation Blessing International Relief and Development Corporation, which the Christian Coalition founder has in the past used to advance his diamond-mining ventures in the Congo region.

The White House staff, he said, "winked at the most far-right House Republicans, who, in turn, drafted a so-called faith bill that...satisfied certain fundamentalist leaders and Beltway libertarians but bore few marks of compassionate conservatism.... Not only that, but it reflected neither the president's own previous rhetoric on the idea nor any of the actual empirical evidence." He declared, "There is a virtual absence as yet of any policy accomplishments that might, to a fair-minded nonpartisan, count as the flesh on the bones of so-called compassionate conservatism."

"So-called compassionate conservatism." That phrase, written by a man who said he still loved and admired George W. Bush, resounded with disillusion. Still, DiIulio held out hope that someday in the years to come, his ideal of a spirited movement to uplift the poor might be realized. There was no domestic policy, but in two years, or six years, something might happen.

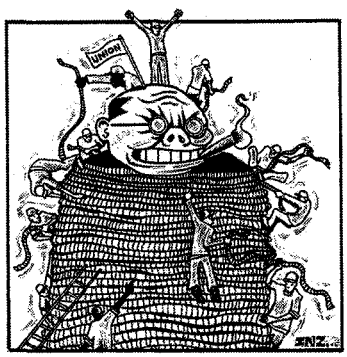
The saddened professor couldn't quite admit that this President is unlikely ever to fulfill the expectations he raised—because in a White House ruled so thoroughly and ruthlessly by pious conservatives, there is so little room for compassion. ■

U.S. WORKERS HAVE LOST THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE. A NEW EFFORT AIMS TO GET IT BACK.

Labor Fights for Rights

DAVID MOBERG

Sadius Isma came to the United States from Haiti looking for freedom and opportunity. But he found little of either when he and fellow workers at the Point Blank Body Armor factory in Oakland Park, Florida, decided to form a union. After 85 percent of the 350 workers had signed cards to join UNITE, the clothing and textile union, Isma led co-workers to the plant manager's office on July 18, 2002, asking the company to recognize the union. The manager told him that it was illegal to form a union, Isma recounted, and shortly afterward called in the sheriff's department, locked out the workers and had Isma arrested—then fired him.



RYAN INZANA

Over the following months, the company fired two more leaders, threatened mass layoffs and offered some workers wage increases to stop them from joining a strike for union recognition—a six-month struggle under police and security-guard surveillance. Despite a rare court injunction and a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) judge's decision that it had violated labor laws, Point Blank continues to fight the union, even as it expands operations with growing US military contracts. Isma had simply wanted better working conditions—respect, clean toilets, air-conditioning, a lunchroom—and a boost in his $6.75-an-hour pay, he said. "I didn't expect the company to treat us like animals."

Isma is not alone. When workers throughout the United States try to organize unions, they nearly always face systematic employer opposition, both legal and illegal, that intimidates many union-friendly workers, encourages anti-union hostility from other employers and creates a political climate that makes union organizing extremely difficult. "Virtually all academic research shows that employer opposition—legal and illegal—is the key factor in unions not organizing," says Rutgers University professor Adrienne Eaton.

This has been known for some time. But now key union leaders have decided that they—with as many allies as they can enlist—need to escalate their efforts dramatically to change the overall public climate for organizing. The AFL-CIO and individual unions will step up efforts to educate and mobilize union members and labor-backed political candidates to fight for the right to organize, and they have launched a new organization—American Rights at Work (ARAW)—that will recruit sympathetic organiza-

David Moberg, a senior editor at In These Times, *writes frequently for* The Nation *on labor issues.*

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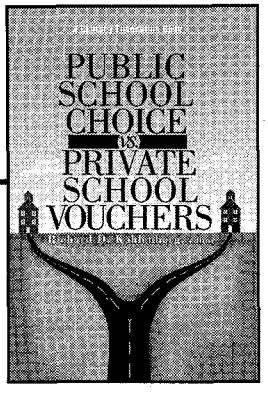

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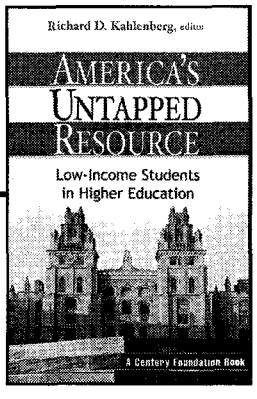

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tions and individuals outside the labor movement to win broader public support for workers' rights. The labor movement hopes to make freedom of association at the workplace—the right of workers to organize unions and to bargain collectively—a civil right as sacrosanct as voting, and to make the pervasive anti-union campaigns of employers as illegitimate as Bull Connor's attacks on voting rights in the 1960s.

The problem is not just a few bad apples, like Point Blank, but the vast majority of American businesses, from Wal-Mart to hospitals owned by religious groups doctrinally committed to worker rights. When workers try to organize, employers typically hire anti-union consultants (in 75 percent of organizing campaigns), force employees to attend anti-union meetings (92 percent), threaten to close the plant if the union wins (51 percent overall, but in 71 percent of manufacturing workplaces, where threats to move overseas are potent) and call in federal immigration agents (in 52 percent of campaigns involving undocumented workers). One-fourth of private-sector employers fire at least one worker for union activity during organizing campaigns. Nobody knows how many workers are fired each year for trying to organize, but the federal Dunlop commission reported in 1994 that the NLRB each year reinstated about 2,000 illegally discharged workers—a gross understatement of the total illegally fired. But even by that standard, one worker was fired for every forty-eight who voted for a union, compared with one fired for every 689 who voted for a union in the early 1950s. By a broader measure, according to a Human Rights Watch study, 24,000 workers proved in 1998 that employers had illegally discriminated against them for engaging in union activity. The consequences are huge. After roughly five decades of union slippage as a share of the work force, only 13.5 percent of all workers (and 8.5 percent of private-sector workers) belong to unions. But if workers didn't face a war against their right to organize, surveys indicate, upward of 44 percent of workers would choose to belong to a union.

Most Americans say they think employer anti-union activity is illegitimate—but they also don't realize it's happening. Only 44 percent of Americans (and only half of union members) think that employers oppose workers' efforts to form unions, according to a February survey by Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the AFL-CIO, and 58 percent said they would disapprove of such employer opposition. Americans overwhelmingly oppose tactics they think are rare but are actually quite common. For example, 92 percent of the public thinks it's unacceptable to fire workers who support the union, but only 17 percent think that employers often fire supporters; 78 percent think it's unacceptable for supervisors to urge individual employees to vote against the union, but only 20 percent think it happens often (it occurs in three-fourths of all campaigns).

Those employer tactics work. As the ratio of workers fired for organizing to the number voting for a union rose over the past five decades, the rate of union success declined. In one extensive study, 36 percent of workers who were opposed to a union—more than the critical margin in most elections—said they voted no because of management pressure. Overwhelmingly, they feared losing their job, a clear indication that employer "speech" is coercive in these situations simply because of the power management has over workers' livelihoods. In the public sector, where managers rarely oppose unions vigorously, if at all, unions win 85 percent of their elections, compared with the actively anti-union private sector, where unions win only about half their elections.

Although the NLRB election process nominally gives workers a chance to vote on union representation, employers can use the rules to turn the process into a "meat grinder" for workers who want a union, according to the AFL-CIO's new organizing director, Stewart Acuff. Consequently, unions now do an estimated four-fifths of their organizing outside NLRB election supervision. They increasingly try through collective bargaining, political leverage, threats of strikes or legislation to neutralize managerial opposition, often with agreements that employers will recognize the union when a majority of workers have signed union cards. With such agreements, unions typically win two-thirds of organizing campaigns, despite widespread management violations of the agreements, according to research by Eaton and Jill Kriesky of West Virginia University, and they win nearly every campaign when there are no employer violations. "The key thing is neutrality," argues Tom Woodruff, executive vice president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). "Card check is just the method to gain neutrality."

Initially, after the National Labor Relations Act was passed in 1935, the NLRB required employers to remain neutral in organizing campaigns (though obviously not all did so), and nearly all unions were recognized simply through a card check, not an election. But the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act permitted employers to oppose unionization and to demand that an election be held. Although some unions have found ways to negotiate or pressure for individ-

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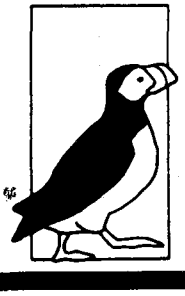

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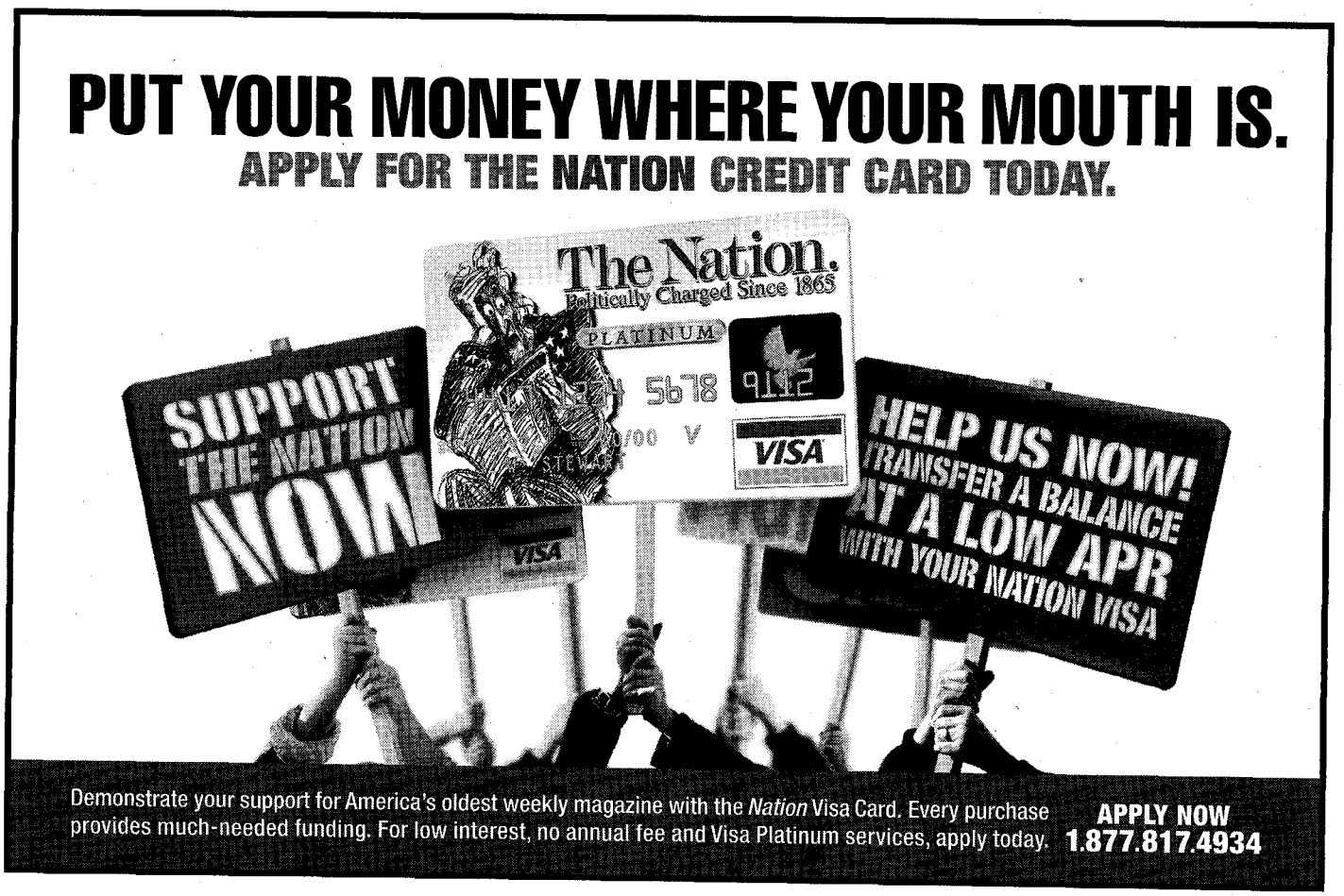
ual deals to neutralize employers, they have so far done much less to block anti-union attacks across the board. Ultimately, unions want to move back to the original spirit of the 1935 legislation, which still states that it is national policy to encourage collective bargaining. Republicans, on the other hand, are trying to make it even harder for unions to keep employers neutral. For example, Republican Representative Charles Norwood of Georgia has proposed banning card-check recognition, and Bush's NLRB is challenging a California law that prohibits businesses from using state funds to fight unionization.

Early last year a small group of unions—eventually including the SEIU, UNITE, the hotel and restaurant employees (HERE), the Teamsters, the Communications Workers (CWA), the Laborers and public employees (AFSCME)—began discussing the formation of an independent group that would protest employer abuses and defend the right to organize, much as the employer-backed National Right to Work Committee has worked against union rights. "Somebody has to get up every day thinking about how we make the rights of workers to organize in America a civil rights issue," said UNITE president Bruce Raynor. "It has to be broad, not just organized labor but academics, intellectuals, entertainers, athletes." Former Representative David Bonior has agreed to chair ARAW, the organization that emerged from these discussions. The AFL-CIO—after overcoming initial shock at the implication the federation wasn't doing enough to fight for worker rights—agreed to contribute $1 million for the first year, and the initiating unions will together put in roughly $2 million, but the group will soon be under control of a board composed mainly of individuals and organizational representatives from outside the labor movement. "The less involvement this has of labor unions, the stronger it may become," argued SEIU president Andrew Stern. "It is an issue of how big corporations have way too much power in the workplace."

ARAW will focus on persuading the general public to support the right to organize, attacking corporate wrongdoers and keeping the heat on politicians. "All these Democrats who ask for money but won't support the right to organize will be in our bull's-eye," said the group's national director, Jonathan Tasini, former president of the National Writers Union. "But even among progressives and the liberal community, there is still a blindness about the importance of unions and even a disdain for unions, which I find outrageous.... I want all the elite opinion-makers and liberals who are willing to get arrested protesting apartheid to put their lives on the line the same way for the right to organize."

Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO—which has had difficulty defining its role in organizing—has greatly expanded its own Voice@Work project, which will be more directed toward educating and mobilizing union members to support organizing and enlisting them in efforts to drum up public support for specific campaigns. Voice@Work will attempt to make "every organizing campaign a community referendum on whether workers have the freedom to form a union in this country," according to its director, Andy Levin. "Instead of having a war behind closed doors with employers, we have to reach out to religious, political, environmental and civic leaders, and we have to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empower workers to tell their story and ask for support."

A central part of the plan is educating and mobilizing union members to combat employer attacks on the right to organize, working in grassroots crusades such as those mounted for many years by Jobs With Justice, a nationwide network of labor-community coalitions that sponsor "workers' rights boards" to highlight workplace abuses. "The key thing is we need to mobilize our own members," argues CWA executive vice president Larry Cohen. "If 12 million union members get active, that will change things. But most union members don't realize how bad the crisis is." Building a long-term campaign for federal labor-law reform, Voice@Work will push for more state and local initiatives to facilitate organizing and educate candidates at all levels about business sabotage of worker rights. "We will have to have action that is strong enough to interfere with business as usual," Acuff said. "There has to be some moral outrage. At the end of the day, it can't be an economic fight. It has to be a moral fight."

The right to organize will be featured prominently in Labor Day activities, including the annual "labor in the pulpit" appearances at houses of worship, and in this fall's immigrant workers' freedom ride, which will be taking place across the country to draw attention to the plight of undocumented workers. Unions are exposing all of the Democratic presidential candidates to workers who have suffered from employer anti-union campaigns and pressing for commitments to worker rights. Both the AFL-CIO's Voice@Work and Jobs With Justice will mark International Human Rights Day, December 10, with right-to-organize demonstrations ranging from a mass rally in Los Angeles to smaller civil disobedience actions around the country.

The task for labor and its allies will not be simply informing the public and union members about employer abuses and defending workers who are trying to organize but changing the way people think about worker organization. Under the influence of struggles over globalization, unions are emphasizing that the right to organize at work—recognized as a fundamental human right in many international agreements—must be enforced in developing countries as well as the United States. But freedom of association at work is also an extension of the First Amendment into an arena that is as important, for individual rights and public policy, as electoral politics. Employers should not be able to restrict or impede it any more than they should be able to control their employees' membership in a political organization. "When did workers get a chance to decide whether companies could belong to the National Association of Manufacturers?" asks Teamsters organizing director Jeff Farmer.

Beyond the fundamental rights issue, the ability of workers to organize has widespread implications for politics, public policy and the economy. If twice as many workers were in unions and their political behavior followed current patterns, the electorate would be larger and more liberal, tipping the balance of national politics to Democrats. More people would have health insurance and secure pensions. There would be less poverty and inequality. University of Wisconsin sociologist Joel Rogers justifiably argues that "the ability to join a union should be as uncontroversially accepted as joining the PTA," but it is precisely because organization of workers affects the distribution of power and money that businesses and their political allies fight so hard.

Yet unions can change the business and political culture, as SEIU's Justice for Janitors has done on a small scale in making card checks the standard for the building-ervices industry. "Our experience has been," argues SEIU building services director Stephen Lerner, "when you establish something as a norm of behavior, it makes it much easier when you're fighting someone who doesn't accept it." Despite the daunting challenge, there are signs—in public views of unions, corporate power, globalization and human rights—that the time is ripe to launch a movement dedicated to establishing the right to organize at work as an inalienable human right. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

troversial. Master poets break ground, disrupting the expectations of readers, and critics often respond with hostility. It is surprising nonetheless that Meghan O'Rourke, a reviewer for *The Nation*, whose readers certainly share Forché's view of the devastations of the twentieth century, could so misread the substance of *Blue Hour*, her magnificent new collection ["She's So Heavy," June 9].

Far from abandoning her engagement with the catastrophes of the recent century, as your reviewer argues, the poet enters imaginatively into the psychic and spiritual consequences of those events. The magnitude of her achievement hardly constitutes a turn away from the poetry of witness. O'Rourke would have Forché return to "the artfully direct reportorial voice" of her El Salvador poems, but such a register would be hopeless in rendering the dissolution of the materiality of the world as we know it. In "On Earth," *Blue Hour*'s central poem, Forché traces the movement of a human consciousness from life to death, a trajectory that leads to a conclusion starkly expressed in the final word, "zero."

Though content is an important element in Forché's work, it has never been her only focus. Paraphrasing her prose poem "The Colonel," O'Rourke quotes the simile Forché employs for the human ears a Salvadoran officer spills on the table but leaves out what has lodged the poem in the memories of so many readers: "He took one of them in his hands, shook it in our faces, dropped it into a water glass. It came alive there." Such transformations—and they abound in *Blue Hour*—are impervious to paraphrase since they are composed to complete themselves in the imagination of the reader.

I will not enumerate the many triumphs of *Blue Hour* here, but I would like to correct a few factual errors. "El Salvador: Aide Memoir," the essay in which Forché engaged "the problem of reduction and oversimplification...of poeticizing horror" first appeared not in *Granta* after *The Country Between Us* was published but in *The American Poetry Review*, in 1981, before the book's publication—its issues already of concern to Forché as she wrote her El Salvador poems. In noting the thirteen years it took Forché to publish her third book, *The Angel of History*, O'Rourke reports that Forché became a journalist for the interim, asserting that the "critical attacks" on *The Country Between Us* "led her away from firsthand witness." Both claims are incorrect. Forché published a few essays during those years but she did not become a journalist. She became a mother, taught at several universities and edited *Against Forgetting: The Poetry of Witness*, a landmark anthology of poems written between the Armenian genocide and Tiananmen Square by poets who lived the violence of the twentieth century.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Life of the Party

TERRY EAGLETON

INTERESTING TIMES:
A Twentieth-Century Life.
By Eric Hobsbawm.
Pantheon. 447 pp. $30.

Interesting Times is a curiously feeble title for an autobiography, rather as if Noam Chomsky were to write an article called "Could America Do Better?" It carries, of course, the sting of an ominous Chinese saying in its tail; ironic English understatement. "I have lived," Eric Hobsbawm remarks, "through almost all of the most extraordinary and terrible century in human history"; but he has lived through it as one of that century's most eminent Marxist historians, and the dispassionate gaze of the historian is reflected in his title. Gleaning one's history from a man who can remember celebrating the centenary of Beethoven's death at school is rather like being instructed in one's religious duties by the Pope. Hobsbawm has also clapped eyes on Stalin, though the dictator was admittedly a corpse at the time of their encounter.

Like most autobiographies, this one will do well in Eric Hobsbawm's England—not because the English love a Marxist but because they love a character. From Dr. Johnson to Winston Churchill, it is the idiosyncratic individual who stirs their imagination, not some unpalatably abstract truth. This is why they love a lord as well as a character, and Oscar Wilde did his best to be both. They love a lord not only because they are cravenly deferential but because they are also anarchic and bloody-minded, and aristocrats are those who are most cavalier about convention.

In this sense, the autobiography is a covertly anti-intellectual genre, designed for those who are more interested in what Tolstoy had for breakfast than what he thought about Plato. It is also a self-contradictory one. Autobiographies set out to capture the uniqueness of the individual life, but find themselves telling the same old story. Everyone has to be born, have parents, get educated, discover sexuality, launch a career and the like. It is biology that lies at the root of biography. And biology is no respecter of individuals. It is also no friend of humility. However modest the autobiographer—and this one is attractively so—it is hard to escape the implication that things are important simply because they happened to you.

The life story, then, is not the most promising of forms for an intellectual—not only because it is allergic to ideas but because intellectuals are not renowned for their enthralling lives. We would not find as dull a life as Darwin's in the least fascinating were it not for what he wrote. For an English intellectual like Hobsbawm, the problem is compounded by the fact that the English are as averse to confessionalism as they are to ideas. Shy, reticent souls that they are, they are not given to producing what Hobsbawm calls "biographies that lift bedclothes," and this one hardly tweaks a sheet. Hobsbawm is properly reserved about his private life, and would be a disastrous flop on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. He lets slip the fact that he was briefly and unhappily married to a woman who qualified as a kosher Cockney, being born not only within the sound of Bow bells but actually in the Tower of London; but this, one feels, is motivated more by cultural curiosity than by emotional exhibitionism. He tells us that both of his parents died when he was very young, and that he was raised by an aunt and uncle; yet though this must surely have had a deep emotional impact on his later life, we learn nothing of it. Instead, he breaks the golden rule of the genre and sets his personal life in the context of

Eric Hobsbawm has written a wry memoir of his journey through the 'age of extremes,' as a historian, jazz critic—and Communist.

Terry Eagleton is professor of cultural theory and John Rylands Fellow at the University of Manchester, Britain. His book After Theory *will be published by Penguin this month.*

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historical events and ideas, not in the context of his taste in brandy or blondes.

As far as ideas go, twentieth-century Britain imported them largely from Central European Jewish émigrés like Hobsbawm himself. Wittgenstein, Namier, Eysenck, Popper, Melanie Klein, Isaac Deutscher, Isaiah Berlin: One can imagine the Neanderthal condition of modern English culture without these brilliant blow-ins and carpetbaggers. Much the same happened in the literary arena, as the heights of "English" literature were effortlessly monopolized by a Pole (Joseph Conrad), three Americans (Henry James, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound) and five Irishmen (Shaw, Wilde, Yeats, Joyce and Beckett). The Irish were expected to write most of England's literature for it, such being the burdens of empire, as well as supplying them over the years with rents, cattle and cannon-fodder.

The position of these European exiles was ambiguous, as Perry Anderson has argued. Shuffling among three or four different cultures, they had a cosmopolitan flair and range that put the parochialism of the British to shame. Because they were mostly refugees from political tyranny and turmoil at the heart of Europe, their work was infused with a passion and urgency that the natives found hard to match. Yet refugees do not commonly rock the life-raft they are clambering aboard. If they view the sedateness of the native culture with a skeptical eye, they can also be grateful for it.

It is an ambiguity well illustrated by this memoir. Born in Alexandria eighty-six years ago, the son of a literary Austrian mother and the offspring of a London working-class family, Eric Hobsbawm was brought up in Vienna, moved to Berlin as a schoolboy while Hitler was scrambling into the Reichstag, and in 1933 fled from there to London, where, astonishingly, he won a scholarship to Cambridge only two years later. He has lived and worked in London ever since. He was not, he insists, a refugee, having arrived in England as a British subject; but he is certainly a citizen of the world, who knew as a young man how to keep enough money about his person for a speedy departure, and who is still conscious that it is possible to feel not quite at home absolutely anywhere. His parents, with suitably internationalist symbolism, were married in a Zurich inhabited at the time by Lenin, James Joyce and the Dadaists.

A polyglot Englishman in Vienna and Berlin, a Jewish immigrant in Britain and a maverick among Communists, Hobsbawm is today almost as much at home in France, Italy and Latin America as he is in Hyde Park. For more than half a century now he has been circling the globe from Santiago to Seoul, teaching, arguing, investigating and befriending in a pentecostal babble of tongues. He has knocked around with Cuban revolutionaries and Chilean novelists, New York jazz musicians and San Francisco bohemians, in the global intellectual village that stretches from Lima to Mysore. Visiting the United States has not always been as simple for him as dropping in on La Paz or acting as an informal translator for Che Guevara in Havana, since the US government, as internationally minded as ever, made him apply for a special visa each time he taught there. He was, one might claim, mightily lucky to get through JFK at all, considering that Iris Murdoch was kept out of the United States for years on account of a surreally short sojourn in the British Communist Party.

In a coruscating cameo of the 1930s in this book, Hobsbawm portrays a turbulent world of frontier-crossing and meetings in back rooms in Berlin, of refugees and resistance fighters, Yugoslav partisans and death camp survivors, *louche* poets and se-

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cret agents, courageous Communists and squalid betrayals. If he was never a Zionist, without a shred of emotional attachment to "the small, militarist, culturally disappointing and politically aggressive nation-state which asks for my solidarity on racial grounds," it is not only because emancipated middle-class Viennese Jews of his generation rarely were; it is also because his life has bred in him a deep-seated aversion to all brands of ethnic particularism. He is uneasy with new history-writing centered on gender, ethnicity and the like, and has made some notoriously negative comments about Third World revolutionary nationalism, sometimes of an unpleasantly *de haut en bas* kind. Nationalism for him meant Hitler, not Ho Chi Minh.

Hobsbawm has been a lifelong Communist, having first joined a Communist organization as a Berlin schoolboy and later hitching up with the party as a student at Cambridge. A good many political leftists in Britain, from the Soviet spy Kim Philby to Tariq Ali and Perry Anderson, have hailed from a cosmopolitan background—often, as with all three of these figures, as a result of empire. (Hobsbawm knew some of the notorious English Soviet spies at Cambridge, and tells us that he would most certainly have become one himself had he been invited. He did, however, lack that vital prerequisite for membership in the British Intelligence Service, an ability to complete the London *Times* crossword puzzle with preternatural speed.) Unlike many of his émigré colleagues, and to his perpetual credit, he did not indulge in the venerable expatriate game of becoming more English than the English, appropriating the Tory politics of the natives along with their plummy accents. On the contrary, he perversely remained a member of the Communist Party long after others had abandoned it in disgust.

He has been, even so, an English Communist, and English Communists are in one sense as much a part of the Establishment as the House of Lords. This, then, is the more sedate, traditionalist side of the citizen of the world. In Hobsbawm's day, a good number of prominent English Communists were donnish, patrician figures who combined an interest in dialectics with a passion for collecting Victorian bric-a-brac. It is not entirely surprising that Hobsbawm once met with a Chinese guerrilla leader in the Atheneum, one of the stuffiest of London's upper-class clubs. He describes himself in this memoir as "an accepted member of the official British cultural establishment"; and although he is suitably enjoying life quite as robustly as he does, he also clearly feels the pleasure of someone taken in from the cold. In fact, he discreetly plays down the degree to which he is a paid-up member of the London literary set, a kind of latter-day Bloomsbury sage in the tradition of Bertrand Russell.

He has never, he confesses, been much of a political activist, being temperamentally more preoccupied with books and birds. Like several members of the pioneering Communist Historians Group, to which he belonged, he came to history from an interest in the literary arts, and it still shows in the stylish, subdued elegance of his prose. E.P. Thompson also started out as a literary student. But literary types are rarely the most eager to get out of bed in order to go leafleting. Indeed, it is hard not to suspect that one reason Hobsbawm lingered so unseasonably in the Communist Party after Hungary and the Prague Spring was because, by that time at least, it didn't really mean much more to him than lingering in the pub.

Hobsbawm arrived at Cambridge University's King's College in the halcyon days of Noel Annan, Maynard Keynes and E.M. Forster, and clearly flourished there. He actually took Forster to a performance

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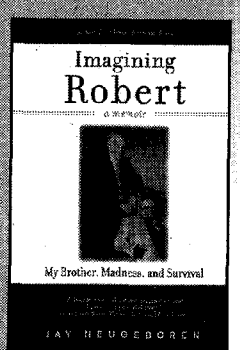

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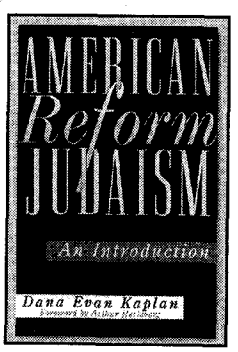

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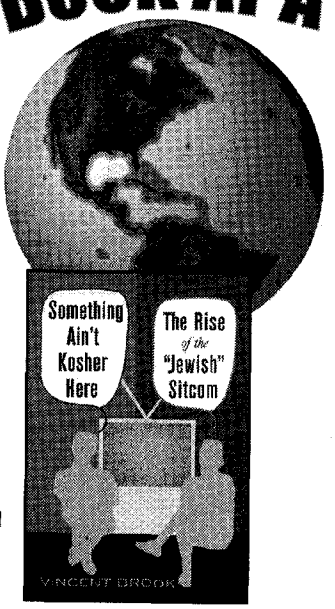

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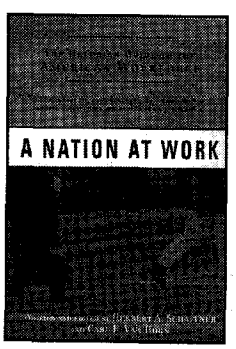

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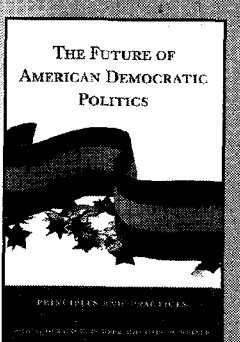

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by Lenny Bruce, an encounter of which one would dearly love to have the transcript. There were still plenty of Darwins, Ricardos, Huxleys and Stracheys among the undergraduates; but though Hobsbawm came, unusually, from a lowly grammar school rather than a posh private school, he was elected a member of the celebrated Apostles' Club, which numbered Tennyson, Russell and Wittgenstein among its former luminaries. The émigré Jewish leftist Hobsbawm was not entirely bedazzled by Cambridge; in a masterly little pen-portrait of the then-provost of King's, he sketches the malice and bitchery "behind the mask of camp senile benevolence." Even so, he had arrived among the English upper-middle classes, and was never to betray any particular discomfort in this suave, soft-toned company.

The Communist Party that Hobsbawm joined in the 1930s was the kind of outfit in which you would abandon your spouse if the Central Committee instructed you to. Indeed, Hobsbawm realized that he was no longer a pukka Communist when he was able to contemplate having a sexual relationship with someone who was not a potential party recruit, a feeling one might still find today among recovering Mormons or repentant Jehovah's Witnesses. He seems to have had few illusions about Stalinism from the outset, while apparently feeling few qualms about belonging to a Stalinist party whose record was littered with sordid betrayals of working-class militancy. Like most of his political tendency and generation, he was mostly bemused by 1968, though open-mindedly so. It was his passion for jazz that lent him a touch more sympathy for youth subcultures than most of the reactionary old party hacks of the day. He was for ten years the jazz critic of *The New Statesman*, writing under the pseudonym Francis Newton, in homage to Frankie Newton, a renowned Communist jazz trumpeter of the 1930s. To remain a party member, he tells us, was to stay true to the memory of the October Revolution and the struggle against fascism; but these admirable sentiments were scarcely a monopoly of the CPs. In fact, it was in the name of the October Revolution that a good many socialists fought against what the Communist Party stood for.

Hobsbawm has been, all along, a Popular Frontist—even as late as the 1980s, when he campaigned against "extreme" leftists in the Labour Party and for an anti-Thatcherite alliance with the Liberals. Inexplicable for a man who lived through the rise of Hitler, he tells us that Labour's electoral defeat at the hands of Thatcherism was "the saddest and most desperate [moment] of my political experience." He does not add that his own efforts to turn the Labour Party to the political right (hardly the most gargantuan of tasks) finally resulted in the advent of the very Blairism he detests—"Thatcherism in trousers," as he dubs it.

Hobsbawm has a good deal to feel gratified about. He is a historian of formidable influence, erudition and stylistic grace; a public figure feted from Bologna to Beijing, yet a man skilled in the subtle arts of personal friendship; a politico who has survived the most bloodstained century known to humanity, yet who has managed to relish his life in the process. He still retains his insatiable energy for parties, debate, travel and ideas. He is one of Aristotle's "men of virtue"—which is not to say that he is a saint, simply that he has thrived, excelled and exercised his prodigious talents to the full. Or, as he himself puts it in less grandly Aristotelian language, "It has been a lot of fun."

Even so, *Interesting Times* concludes on a sobering note. Hobsbawm is fond of the United States, but glad that he and his children do not live in a society that acknowledges no limits on its willingness to use its strength. The twenty-first century, he observed, "opens on twilight and obscurity." It is greatly to our loss that we shall not have his wisdom to guide us through it. ■

MUSIC

Swing Time for Hitler

BRIAN MORTON

SWING TANZEN VERBOTEN

It is of some small comfort that totalitarian regimes are never quite as total as either their leaders or subsequent historians might imagine. As much as the Bolsheviks may have wished to "abolish" religion, faith and observance persisted all through the Soviet sphere and contributed to the disintegration of the Communist system. Similarly and more recently, the Taliban exercised less than certain—and certainly less than the publicized—influence over the people of Afghanistan.

By the same token, we have long been used to the idea that the Nazis proscribed jazz and sought to ban it from every corner of the Reich. To the ideologists of National Socialism, it was a music of racial impurity, lumped in with other examples of *entartete Kunst* or "degenerate art," damned as "Judaeo-Negroid" and not fit for the ears of good Germans. In recent years, this rather one-dimensional picture has begun to shift significantly.

One tiny example suggests the complexity of the real situation: the strange tale of guitarist Django Reinhardt, who managed not only to survive but to thrive in Nazi-occupied France, despite the fact that he was a gypsy, and a handicapped gypsy at that, thanks to the patronage and the protection of a jazz-loving Luftwaffe officer. Those last four words represent such an oxymoron that most recent encyclopedia entries on Django, who died half a century ago in 1953, make no mention whatever of Oberleutnant Dietrich Schulz-Koehn. One of the strangest photographs of the war was taken by Schulz-Koehn outside La Cigale, a jazz club in Paris. It shows a gypsy (Django), four Africans and a Jew posed smiling beside a fellow officer. The Germans were there not to arrest these men but to listen to them play. With its whisper of collaboration, this remains an awkward detail for jazz fans to deal with, but it is even more unsettling, given the prevailing notion of the Nazis' attitude toward jazz.

There have been a number of attempts to rewrite this odd corner of popular music history. Michael Zwerin's *La Tristesse de Saint Louis: Swing Under the Nazis* took its title from the habit of disguising jazz tunes—in this case "St. Louis Blues"—from the authorities under safely translated titles. The story of wartime swing is also told in a chapter in *Hitler's Airwaves*, a study of propaganda broadcasting under the Third Reich written by business executive Horst J.P. Bergmeier and economist Rainer E.

Brian Morton, a saxophonist and composer, is co-author of the Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD *and a regular broadcaster on BBC radio.*

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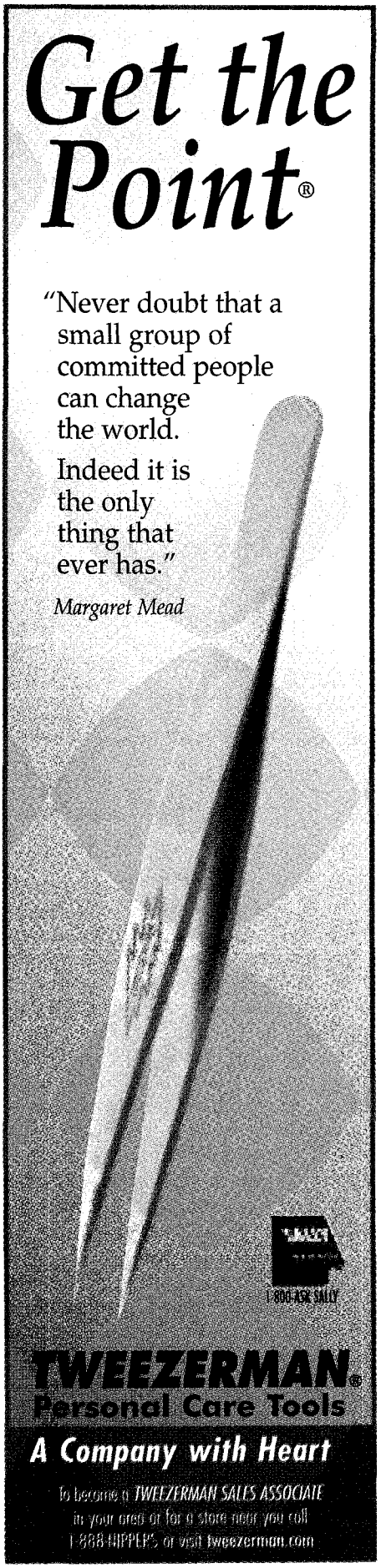
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Lotz. Now, though, their exploration of the period has been taken a step further and given additional flesh in an ambitious box set of music with the arresting title *Swing Tanzen Verboten: Swing Music and Nazi Propaganda During World War II*, just released by the English firm Proper Records with text by Dutch jazz expert Joop Visser. Its four CDs are an eye-opening experience, not so much musically, though there are fine cuts by Reinhardt, but because they raise the possibility that far from banning jazz, the Nazi authorities were aware of and tried to harness some of its appeal.

Imagine for a moment that you are a British or American jazz fan in wartime scanning the airwaves in hopes of finding some familiar music. Out of the ether a male voice begins to sing a familiar melody. "I'm the Sheik of Araby,/Your love belongs to me./At night, when you're asleep/into your tent I'll creep./The stars that shine above/will light a way to love./You'll rule this land with me/the Sheik of Araby." Before the war you heard umpteen versions of this song, which was inspired by Rudolph Valentino in *The Sheik*. Even if a band didn't have a singer, most fans could mouth the words. But this time, something strange happens. After that first verse, a voice cuts across the music: "Here is Mr. Churchill's latest song." The melody stays the same, but the words are unfamiliar. "I'm afraid of Germany/her planes are beating me./At night, when I should sleep,/into the Anderson I must creep./Although I'm England's leading man/I'm led to the cellar by ten./A leader in the cellar each night/that's the only damned way I can fight."

That was certainly not the way Ted Snyder, Harry B. Smith and Frances Wheeler wrote it, so jazz fans will rightly insist on some personnel details for this curious performance. The band included Riimis van den Broek, Helmuth Friedrich and Ferri Juza on horns, Franz Muck on piano and the Krupa-like Fritz "Freddy" Brocksieper on drums. The conductor of the orchestra was a man called Lutz Templin, but he'd ceded nominal control to the singer Charlie Schwedler. "The Sheik of Araby" was one side of the first record issued in late 1940 on the Klarinette & Mandoline imprint, soon to be familiar from its maroon label and K&M prefix. As those altered lyrics suggest, the artists—Charlie and His Orchestra—weren't merely German swing enthusiasts flouting their leaders' disapproval. They were government employees broadcasting to the enemy in the enemy's own language and in a musical form that their employers were nominally committed to stamping out. Though less well-known than the infamous Lord Haw-Haw (William Joyce) or Axis Sally (Mildred Gillars), who broadcast on behalf of the fascist regimes, they were an important part of the Reich's propaganda effort to smuggle a defeatist message into British and American homes.

The history of wartime jazz abounds with such ironies. That a form of music proscribed as "degenerate" should become an instrument of state policy seems more than a little perverse. Within weeks of Hitler's coming to power in March 1933, the new Nazi government's broadcasting authority announced the banishment of swing and hot music from the airwaves. Jazz had long been suspect and such a directive was inevitable, but in practice, it would be a further two years before Eugen Hadamovsky, the program director of RRG, could announce that "as of today, nigger jazz is finally switched off on the German radio."

There was no more consensus in government circles about what defined jazz than there was in the jazz clubs and cellars of Berlin and Frankfurt, where such matters were debated as passionately as in New York or London. From an ideological point of view, jazz was "Judaeo-Negroid" music and thus complicit in the "shame of Versailles." From a Nazi point of view, defeat in the First World War was the result of Jewish treachery at home and led to still further racial defilement, most hurtfully symbolized by the presence of black French colonial troops in the occupied Rhineland. The distorted rhythms and "atonality" of jazz might originally have seemed an unconscious expression of "Negroid" sexuality, but they became—to Nazi ears—part of a new Jewish fifth column, a sinister conspiracy to undermine Aryan culture.

The more extreme exponents of anti-Semitism and cultural nationalism, like ideologue Alfred Rosenberg's Kampfbund fur Deutsche Kultur (Campaign for German Culture), would have happily cauterized cultural modernism and replaced it with a fey folk culture. To a degree, Hitler was of similar mind, but Hitler's views on music and art were inchoate and largely unconsidered, expressing personal knee jerks rather than a coherent aesthetic philosophy. Much more significant to this story was the more thoughtful and sophisticated approach of his propaganda minister Josef Goebbels. Whatever else he might have been, Goebbels was a man of some culture and viscerally opposed to the populist strain that ran through the lower ranks of the Nazi Party. He was also profoundly convinced that the radio loudspeaker was the key

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MINNESOTA

instrument in the struggle to maintain national unity and resistance to the forces of "Bolshevism" (a term almost as amorphous and cloudy as "jazz").

The piano-playing, widely read Goebbels saw an urgent need to maintain a certain level of sophistication in German broadcasting. There was no such consensus within his ministry. His deputy Hans Hinkel would have sanctioned nothing but "good German music," which usually meant ersatz folk songs and oompah bands. Surprisingly, given his somewhat exaggerated enthusiasm for Wagner and Bruckner (light operetta was probably more his speed), Hitler took a generally pragmatic view and in summer 1942, according to transcriptions of his table talk, was suggesting that propaganda broadcasts directed at Britain and America should contain a proportion of musical material that would appeal to such audiences. This was the policy that would prevail and would lead to the formation of Charlie and His Orchestra.

However ironic the story of wartime swing might seem, it is also full of gaps and occlusions. Jazz fans are as addicted to gaps in information as to the known details, and there is a perverse appeal in the Proper set's fragmentary discographies and obscure personnels. The man chosen to lead the propaganda orchestra, saxophonist and violinist Lutz Templin, was not a card-carrying Nazi and seemed to have no strong political convictions. He had no strong musical ideology either. There is a certain mythology that Templin played hot music. Indeed, it's probably safer to talk about German swing than German jazz, since there was little hot playing to be heard until the bebop revolution swept in at the end of the war and young men like the Mangelsdorff brothers in Frankfurt, Albert and Emil, began to construct a new German jazz inspired by the most advanced American models. For the propaganda swingers of the war years Paul Whiteman's much-derided but hugely successful symphonic jazz was regarded as the acme of taste.

Five years ago, I spoke to a few surviving musicians of the period, for a BBC documentary series on wartime and propaganda swing. None remembered Lutz Templin as anything other than a competent player and leader, and this is borne out by the cuts on *Swing Tanzen Verboten*; they're competent, but mechanical and rather soulless, and there is certainly no sign that any of these players ached to fire off a hot solo. A few of those I spoke with remembered or had heard of Charlie Schwedler as a smooth opportunist, happy to lend his light voice and unctuous personality to whatever message was required of him. Only drummer Freddie Brocksieper commanded anything like admiration. One elderly man, who'd played clarinet in a wartime orchestra in Hanover, and who declined to be named on air, said that Freddy was a finer musician than any of the Americans and the only one who had any real understanding of hot jazz. Musicianship, though, was secondary to a political message, and whatever their private instincts, these players must have been relieved to be not just surviving the war but seemingly contributing to the effort in a relatively risk-free capacity.

RRG's "Political Cabaret" began broadcasting on shortwave to the United States early in 1940. Schwedler was, it seems, an occasional contributor, but it was later in the year before Charlie and His Orchestra was properly convened and began to issue those K&M discs that now represent the ambiguous legacy of wartime propaganda swing. Propaganda music had been made and broadcast since the early days of the so-called Phony War. The first listed by Bergmeier and Lotz is a sourly anti-Semitic reworking of the old Protestant hymn "Onward, Christian Soldiers," recorded on October 11, 1939, by one Erhard Bauschke and his orchestra. The sentiments are generic and predictable; the rhyming is, by comparison with what followed, fairly sophisticated: "Onward conscript army,/marching on to war,/fight and die for Jewry,/as we did before." Later on, the propaganda lyricists had to adapt to events as quickly as possible. The Gershwins' "They All Laughed" provided a useful template, especially in the dark days after Dunkirk when it was thought the British might be intimidated into defeatism. "They all laughed at Germany and its leader/when he said that Germany will rise/...They all laughed at Germany wanting colonies/said, she was reaching for the moon!/Now it's a joke to deny German victory/wise guys have to change their tunes." George was already dead by this time, but Ira, the lyricist, must have been turning uncomfortably in his sleep as lines like these went out over the airwaves.

Just as "St. Louis Blues" was translated as "La Tristesse de Saint Louis" in occupied France to keep the suspect title from the ears of Wehrmacht soldiers, so the W.C. Handy song was also turned into a propaganda vehicle, introduced by Charlie as the lament of a Negro working on the London docks during the blackout. "I hate to see the evenin' sun go down/'cause the German, he done

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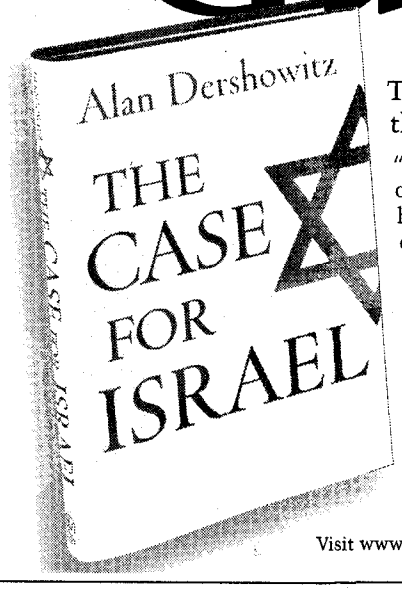
bombed this town." The revisions, here and elsewhere in Charlie's repertoire, hardly constitute deathless blues poetry, but they survive in a curiously subversive relation to the original. Just as jazz musicians understood the power of transforming a light and simple song into something dark and resonant—John Coltrane's reworking of "My Favorite Things" would be a good example—so the very familiarity of these songs increased their propaganda value; given that British and American audiences could hum the melody, how long would it be before they treacherously sang the new words as well? It is as unwise to underestimate as it is difficult to quantify the impact on listeners—and, as Goebbels hoped, sophisticated listeners—in the Allied countries.

The success of the German propaganda effort can only be judged in the context of ultimate defeat, but it is clear that during the war Goebbels and his more responsive officials found a way of harnessing modern technology with the most flexible and responsive form in popular music and creating a propaganda weapon of considerable power. Some "black" stations, like Radio Arnhem, were conceived with such skill that Allied troops and even some of their intelligence officers were convinced that they were listening to the real thing. The supply of English-speaking Nazi sympathizers willing to broadcast on behalf of the Axis was never large. For all the publicity given to "Lord Haw-Haw" and to Ezra Pound, for his insane ramblings on behalf of Mussolini, they were exceptions. Music proved to be a more potent and a more insidious propaganda device.

Listening to the tunes on *Swing Tanzen Verboten* is a fairly dispiriting business. Nothing here merits a second listen on purely musical grounds, and yet these strange survivals offer important historical insights. To repeat, it has been casually accepted that the Nazis and the Soviets "banned" jazz. Neither is more than hypothetically true. But while it's long been understood that the Soviet authorities made a distinction between jazz as the spontaneous expression of a beleaguered proletariat and jazz as a bourgeois affectation, a similar finessing hasn't until recently been applied to the situation in Nazi Germany. The survival of jazz under the Third Reich is a curious story of oversight and tacit tolerance.

The experience of Django Reinhardt remains the best clue to the reality. The same regime that first attempted to expunge the new Germany of the taint of jazz also kept many of the country's swing musicians in employment. The idea of Goebbels as a jazz

Not Guilty.



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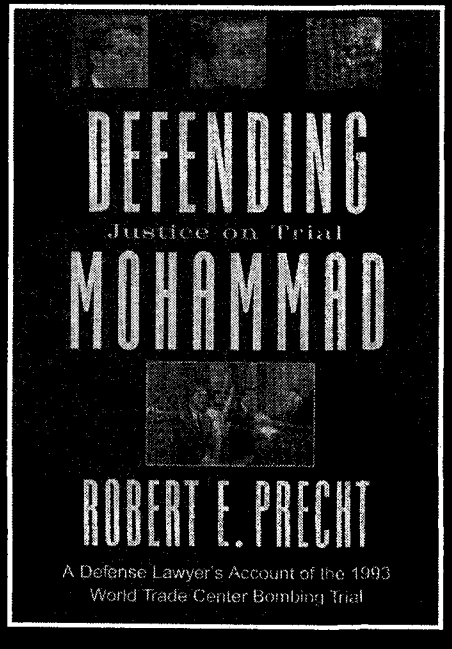
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fan is fantastic nonsense, the kind of thing Mel Brooks or Woody Allen might turn into a screenplay, but Goebbels understood the semantics of jazz, its ambiguous resonance of both servitude and freedom, better than most of his colleagues. Jazz, we have been told in film after film and novel after novel, is the quintessential music of resistance and rebellion. In Josef Skvorecky's fantasy *The Bass Saxophone* a single note from that improbable instrument is a clarion of freedom. But this is an unduly sentimental picture. Jazz is an existential form. It changes and adapts to circumstance and it takes on unexpected colorations, not just black and blue. ■

ART

Regarding the Pain of Others

ARTHUR C. DANTO

MAX BECKMANN

In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates illustrates his theory of the parts of the soul with the story of Leontius, who saw some corpses rotting outside the walls of Athens and was torn between revulsion and the desire to gaze at them. Leontius covered his eyes, but the desire was overpowering. "Look for yourselves, you evil things," he scolded his eyes, "get your fill of the beautiful sight!" This was an early example of what the ancients called *akrasia*, or weakness of will, where we find ourselves doing what we know we shouldn't. But the example illuminates an uncomfortable truth in the psychology of moral perception: Human beings derive pleasure from seeing what disgusts them; hence there is a pornography of torn and bloodied bodies, as well as of buff and sexy ones. This explains why viewers, rather than being simply revolted by depictions of martyrdoms and crucifixions, are instead drawn to them—a truth that underscores the Counter-Reformation's belief that the church might strengthen people's faith by increasing the luridness with which Christ's tormented flesh was represented. It explains an aspect of the power of images. It also helps explain why art that undertakes to show the horrifying truth of war is so often counterproductive. It serves to attract viewers precisely by repelling them.

Consider Max Beckmann's *The Way Home*, the first plate in *Hell* (1919), a portfolio of ten large black and white lithographs that can be seen in New York at the extraordinary exhibition of his work at MoMA-Queens (until September 29). Two figures face each other beneath a street lamp, one the artist himself in suit and bowler, the other a grossly disfigured veteran, wearing the familiar brimless cap of the German enlisted man at the time of World War I. Half his face has been blown off, he is noseless and almost eyeless, and the stump of an arm protrudes, like a stick, from his sleeve, which Beckmann grips with one hand while he points "the way home" with the other. A shadowy pair of crippled veterans are further up the street, behind a woman, from whose boots and jutting hips one infers that the street is her milieu. It is not entirely clear that the soldier can see which way the finger points. But Beckmann can see: Like Leontius, he cannot take his eyes off the veteran's ghastly, skull-like head. And neither can we.

There is visual evidence that Beckmann actually saw such a head when he was a medical orderly in Flanders in 1915. A drypoint, *The Grenade*, shows wounded soldiers in the foreground, one of whom has lost part of his face. We can see the teeth through the hole. The scene of the explosion is imagined: Several panicked figures flee the bursting shell. But the cheekless man must have been drawn from life; Beckmann made many sketches of the maimed and dead, and throughout his work he called upon his knowledge of what human beings actually look like, dead or barely alive, on the field of battle. But his time as a field medic did more than provide opportunities for life (or death) studies. Beckmann, who lived in an apartment above the morgue, and once dreamed that dead bodies invaded his room, was left with traumatic memories that he struggled in vain to master, and that ultimately led, in 1915, to a severe breakdown. Counting on art to help him through his ordeal, he managed to visit the

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Musée des Beaux Arts in Brussels, where he came to admire the so-called Flemish primitives, including especially Rogier van der Weyden. They were to help frame his vision of reality when he returned to his career as a painter after the war, but looking at art did him little good in keeping despair at bay.

Beckmann started to paint again while still in uniform, during his slow recovery behind the lines in Germany. In a haunting self-portrait as a medical orderly, which is not, unfortunately, in the MoMA show, he appears in his green uniform, with the Red Cross insignia attached to his collar, presumably in the act of painting the picture of himself that we see. It's as if he were bringing himself back to life by painting: He shows himself closely studying his still frightened expression, getting outside himself, as it were, away from the images that trouble his dreams. Beckmann's output of self-portraits is matched only by Rembrandt's, but this is one of the few in which he actually depicts himself as an artist, perhaps because painting, just after his time in the field hospital, was his particular "way home." Typically, Beckmann shows himself as part of the life he depicts. In his 1918 artistic statement, "A Confession," he wrote: "I need to be with people. In the city. That is just where we belong these days. We must be part of the misery that is coming."

The shattering truth was that, as the title of his portfolio implies, life in postwar Germany had itself become hell, the fabric of civilian life having been torn to shreds. A lot of the painting made by German artists who did military service was angry and accusatory. The Dadaist George Grosz had also undergone severe breakdown, and even tried to drown himself in a latrine in order not to be sent back to the trenches. Otto Dix, a machine-gunner throughout the war, published his brutal *War Portfolio* afterward. Gruesomely wounded veterans stumble through their postwar pictures. Max Ernst, another Dadaist who had served as an artilleryman, later wrote: "A horrible futile war had robbed us of five years of our existence. We had the collapse into ridicule and shame of everything represented to us as just, true, and beautiful. My works of that period were not meant to attract, but to make people scream." It was an art of shock and disillusionment, a mirror of what Germany had done to itself.

Beckmann's initial impulse, by contrast, appears to have been to use his art to help heal German society. In a letter to his wife in 1915, he had written, "What would we

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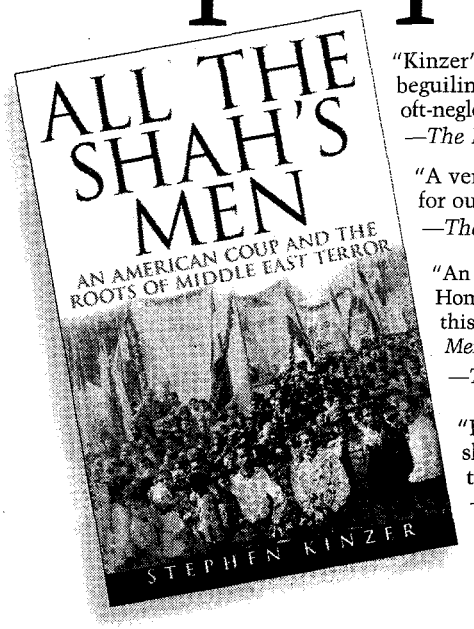

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poor mortals do if we didn't continually equip ourselves with ideas about God and country, love and art, in an attempt to hide that sinister black hole?" He rarely painted the war as he knew it, at least as such, but his medical observations gave him a vocabulary for dealing with damaged bodies in scenes of biblical enactment, especially so in his exceedingly ambitious if somewhat embarrassing *Descent From the Cross* of 1917. A patron, with whom he had been looking at a Gothic woodcarving of a Pietà, challenged the artist to make a modern painting as powerful as it. The immense, awkward *Descent From the Cross* is unmistakably a modern work, with art-historical allusions to Rogier and Matthias Grünewald, and with irresistible metaphorical associations for a shattered nation hoping for resurrection. Beckmann brought the knowledge he had acquired in observing dead bodies to his depiction of Christ's body, which is very much that of a cadaver. It could not easily fit into a coffin without breaking its arms, which, because of rigor mortis, are stiffly extended from the time on the Cross. Christ's drawn, emaciated body is lacerated and bruised, and the soles of his feet are turned upward in pronate position, showing the nail-holes.

Descent From the Cross is an ugly painting, and it is difficult to know what consolation it or its pendants—*Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*, or *Adam and Eve* of that same year—might have brought to viewers. The figures are as dispiriting as the landscape is bleak: a jeering figure, pointing at the Adulteress, is straight out of Bosch, while Adam and Eve look as if they had spent their lives in, respectively, a coal mine and a beer house, rather than in the Garden of Eden. Beckmann's Gothic borrowings enabled him to show human beings as morally disfigured as the world the war had left them with.

Berlin after the war was an exceptionally violent city, torn by revolution and beset by crime—a site of cold, hunger, epidemic disease, demoralization and radical disorder, of rape, torture, murder. These are the subjects of *Hell*, which shows how cruelly men and women can treat one another when the social structures that underwrite daily life unravel. Beckmann prefaces his portfolio with a portrait of himself as a circus barker, beneath which he wrote the following sardonic caption:

> Honored ladies and gentlemen of the public, pray step up. We can offer you the pleasant prospect of ten minutes or so in which you will not be bored. Full satisfaction guaranteed or your money back.

It is difficult to resist the thought that Beckmann's model for *Hell* was Goya's suite of etchings, *Los Caprichos*, which also has a self-portrait at the beginning, and the slogan "The sleep of Reason produces monsters." Goya's images are moral allegories, which refer partly to the *comédie humaine*, and partly to the inhumanities of politics and religion in the Spain of his time. So far as I know, Goya does not show himself as part of that world. But Beckmann is outside the world of Hell as barker, and inside

Self-Portrait in Tuxedo (1927). © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

it as witness and commentator. *Hell* is like *Los Caprichos* fused with *The Disasters of War*, comic and gruesome at once.

Plate 6 of *Hell* is titled *The Night*, which Beckmann worked up into one of his most famous paintings, bearing the same title. It depicts a scene of brutality that could as easily have taken place during the Thirty Years' War, which had been a high point, until the twentieth century, of the suffering war can inflict on human beings, with the difference that *Night*'s agony takes place after hostilities have ceased. Vicious intruders terrorize a household. The woman of the house is shown from behind, tied by her wrists to a window frame. Her legs are spread, her buttocks are exposed, her corset has been opened and her garments lie torn about her. A lit candle sits on the floor behind her, and it seems clear that she has been raped and tortured. Her husband is now being tortured on the dinner table: A man is tightening an improvised noose around his neck; another, with a

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bandaged head, smokes a pipe while twisting the householder's arm. The victim's left leg sticks rigidly out, the sole of his foot is blackened. A third hoodlum is holding the comically angelic, fair-haired daughter, wrapped in a red curtain, under his arm, who gazes tearfully at her mother's face, which we cannot see. A dog howls from beneath the tablecloth. Beckmann employs a kind of soft Cubism to evoke the spaces in this nightmare scene, and to insinuate, perhaps, the shattering of a world. It is often classed as an allegorical painting, scholars poring over it to find local allusions, but I think it was just current events, like so much else in *Hell*.

Martyrdom (Plate 3) is a portrait of Rosa Luxemburg, her arms outstretched as if crucified, her eyes rolled upward in death, as stiff as a Romanesque Jesus. Her body is being pulled from an automobile by a grinning banker in tailcoat and checked trousers, while coarse militiamen beat her with rifle butts. *The Last Ones* (Plate 9) shows a firefight of bitter-end Spartacists, one of whom grimaces with pain as his guts spill out like curly worms, while figures fall this way or that, as in a comic drawing of slapstick performers. A starving family sits before empty dishes, a porcine man carries a skeletal corpse, gasbags harangue the crowds, suave dancers two-step to string players and drunks sing a patriotic song to the wheezing of an accordion. In the last plate, *The Family*, a young boy gleefully plays soldier, with toy grenades and helmet. His severe-looking grandmother protects tomorrow's grenadier, as Beckmann, pointing with one hand, as he did in the first plate, holds his head in the other hand. Nothing has been learned.

In *The Night*, Beckmann discovered his artistic vocation. He was never quite so topical or political again. The thought that *The Night* is allegorical is a retrospective judgment, since his most distinctive work is increasingly allegorical and symbolic. He portrayed himself as a clown the following year, wearing the same clown's traditional collar of points he wore in the frontispiece to *Hell*. He is holding a slapstick and a mask in his left hand while extending his right hand in pronate position, as if displaying stigmata. A horn is in his lap. Later he did two paintings, which seem pendants, *Carnival* and *The Dream*. Each is filled with symbols: musical instruments, masks, clown paraphernalia, candles. In *The Dream*, a mustached man with bandaged, perhaps amputated hands, climbs a ladder, carrying a large fish—a symbol that often recurs. An organ grinder, perhaps blind, blows a horn, and a clown (judging by his collar) pulls himself along on cut-off crutches, as his legs have been amputated at the knee. A blond girl displays a palm, as if soliciting coins for the organ grinder, while holding a Punchinello doll with the other. A girl in carnival costume lies on the floor, her skirts flying, playing a kind of viola. A mandolin lies beside her. The interpretation of dreams is always intricate, and so far as I have been able to read in the Beckmann literature, we are more or less on our own to say what it all means, here and elsewhere, in these strong, handsomely painted, unsettling works, including the nine triptychs upon which Beckmann's greatest reputation rests. He painted magnificently in the thirty years that remained to him, but it is impossible, because of the complexity of the individual works, to discuss in suitable detail the remarkable art he left us, so much of which is shown in what is, after all, a retrospective exhibition.

I shall, however, offer an interpretive conjecture regarding *Departure*, the great triptych Beckmann finished in 1935, with which visitors to MoMA have been long familiar. The central panel shows three figures in a boat: a mother and child, a king fishing with a net and a mysterious personage wear-

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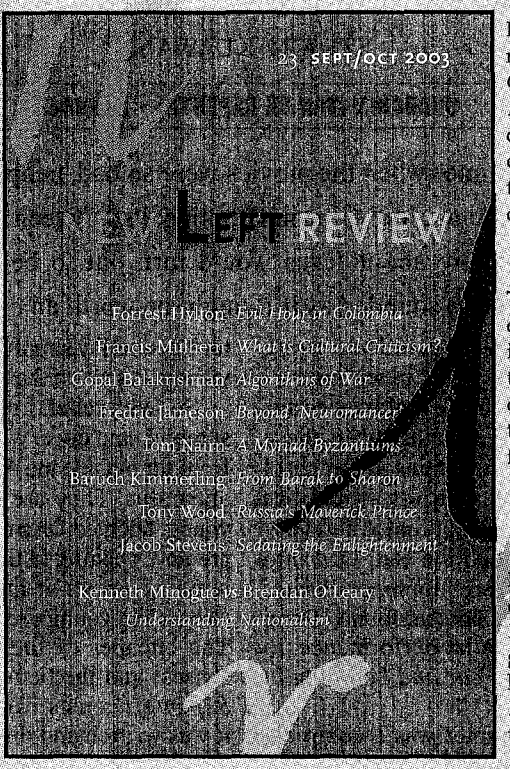
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ing a strange headdress. There is a Fisher King in Arthurian legend, a maimed figure who lives in a bleak castle set in a wasteland, and I believe him to be the subject of this work. The Grail quester, Perceval, witnesses a strange procession in the Fisher King's castle: Young people carry a bleeding lance and a golden chalice that the knight later realizes was the Holy Grail, which could have healed the Fisher King—if only Perceval had asked what it was—while restoring the wasteland to fertility. The left panel shows, among others, a brutally wounded figure, with bleeding armstumps tied together above his head. The right panel shows a blindfolded figure carrying a fish, and a couple bound together, one upside down. A passing musician beats a drum. Germany had been a wasteland in 1918; it was about to be a wasteland again. Two years after finishing *Departure*, Beckmann had the supreme honor of having his work displayed in the notorious "Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich. The day after it opened, he and his wife left Germany forever, spending the war years in Amsterdam before coming to America. His art is the mythography of wounds. ■

FILMS

Bull's Eye

STUART KLAWANS

SUDDENLY (TAN DE REPENTE) • CARNAGE

This was the summer when the movies were so bad, people were reduced to complaining about a Mel Gibson film they hadn't seen. Maybe his yet-to-be-released picture about Jesus would turn out to be awful—or maybe not—but at least it sounded as if it might be worth an opinion. How many seconds of conversation could you wring from the actually existing blockbusters? Much of what I saw in the multiplexes this summer I let pass unremarked in these pages, since (wrack my brains as I might) I could find nothing much to say about films such as *The Hulk*, except that it had very strangely transformed the Bad Dad into a burned-out Berkeley hippie, or *Pirates of the Caribbean*, except that Johnny Depp had given a very similar performance, in better company, in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.

Not that the summer was a complete loss for big studio movies. While *Finding Nemo* was busy making a bundle, it also upheld the honor of American commercial movie-making; and if you had a 4-year-old at home, it set loose many hours of talk, some of which might touch upon the movie itself. But what *Finding Nemo* did, it accomplished virtually single-finned. The summer's other wounded-animal epic, *Seabiscuit*, achieved a smidgen of critical honor but no great success. I ran across few people who were burning to discuss it; and there were none who cared to join me in pondering the unjustly maligned *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle*. (Where, among the critics, was this film's Jacques Rivette, ready to declare that the proof of its director's genius lay simply and self-evidently in what you saw on the screen?)

So, with relief, I now mark the close of summer, and do so with news of two films from far outside the American commercial apparatus. They are the first features of young, talented filmmakers whose pictures are now opening in the United States after winning prizes at international festivals (where the young are marked as talented). The cheaper of the two movies (in all senses) and the better, *Suddenly (Tan de Repente)*, comes from Argentina, where it was written and directed by Diego Lerman, based none too literally on the novel *La Prueba* by César Aira. The grander, more impressive-looking film, *Carnage*, comes officially from France but is also (by the wonders of co-production) from Spain and Belgium, where it was directed by Delphine Gleize, based on some odd ideas that were knocking around in her head.

Of course the reason people go to such pictures, or read about them, is not just to have a good time today but to guess at what moviedom might look like tomorrow. (I mean the sliver of movie territory that will be left unoccupied by either *Terminator 6: Recall of the Machines* or the release on DVD of installments one through five.) Looking ahead from the viewpoint of *Suddenly* and *Carnage*, I venture to predict this much: South America will remain home to at least one practitioner of an actor-centered, observational cinema, while Europe will continue to harbor at least one director of image-centered moral fables.

Carnage is in fact such a European Union of moralized images, all buzzing synchronistically among characters who often don't know one another, that you might think Gleize was trying to stuff a whole Kieslowski trilogy into a 130-minute feature. The weightiest of her symbols, at more than 500 kilos, is a bull named Romero, who dies in a ring in the south of Spain and is cut into pieces. The horns go to a man in Belgium; the eyes, to his estranged brother; the meat (cooked in red wine) to a Spanish woman; a bone to some characters in the north of France and, through them, to a dog. Even the matador gets a piece of the bull, after having been gored. As he lies in the hospital in a coma, three of his colleagues come by with the ear he's been awarded and tuck it unsanitarily under his mattress.

Everyone who is touched by the bull changes in some way; but these magical results of the animal's death and dismemberment are only the most obvious of the correspondences and coincidences that run through *Carnage*. The matador is gored; and a man at an ice-skating rink rams his head, bull-like, against the wall. A little girl with epilepsy is cradled by her schoolteacher; and a timid would-be actress is cradled at a psychotherapy session. The girl makes room for her parents' enormous dog, which continually crowds her; and a pregnant woman decides to bark at her neighbors through a crack in the door. Add to this far-from-complete list the various emergency vehicles, bandages, flaked-off body parts, animal costumes, stuffed heads and arenas that figure in the film, and you've got a system of motifs that's as elaborately, obsessively controlled as Gleize's CinemaScope compositions.

Fortunately, a lot of what she does with these motifs turns out to be funny. The delicate equilibrium of Gleize's world is always tipping, but it's no more likely to collapse in the direction of disaster than of slapstick, which her camera placements keep cool and droll. Objects and people have a way of going bump when they come to the edge of her frame, as if the visual limits she'd set were real. When that happens, at least some of her characters react with slow burns or deadpan astonishment. Chiara Mastroianni, who has the looks and bloodline of a duchess, plays charmingly against type as the awkward, inhibited actress, who is cast only

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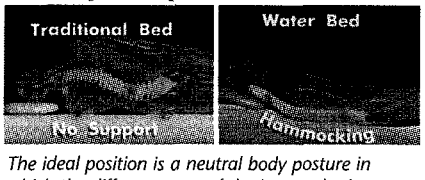

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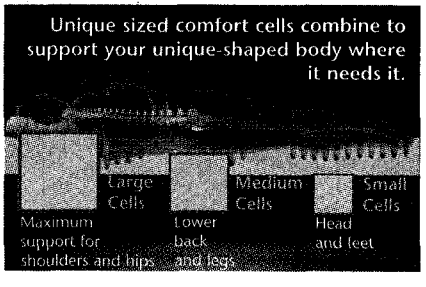
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in sales promotions at supermarkets. Long-faced, shambling Jacques Gamblin brings a well-frayed patience to the role of the eye researcher with the pregnant, barking wife; and Clovis Cornillac, whose shaved skull resembles a lightbulb that somebody ought to turn on, wanders through the proceedings as a philosopher who has given up thinking. Most notable among the characters who aren't funny is the great Angela Molina—still beautiful, still the magnet who turns all other actors into rings of iron filings—in the role of a woman who is losing her ability to pretend.

But pretend about what? Why is she starting to crack, apart from Gleize's notion that she ought to? How does a dinner of bull stew push her to desperate action? For that matter, what is Gamblin supposed to be doing with those bull's eyes, other than "working" with them? How come his brother, the taxidermist, is such a repressed, mother-dominated loner? (I know, that's the description of all movie taxidermists.) And what makes the little girl, Winnie, so all-knowing? In the image-centered tradition that Gleize is practicing, the pattern is supposed to provide the master answer, eliminating the need for such literal-minded questions. So it does—in some movies. In *Carnage*, though, the sense of authorial fiat is so overpowering, and the spines of the characters so flimsy, that you, too, may begin to feel pushed around, so that you ask "how?" and "why?" just as a way of shoving back.

Yes, Gleize is an extraordinarily promising filmmaker. (The proof, as Rivette would have said, is self-evident on the screen.) At 30, she already has a daunting set of skills—and if, for the moment, she has more of a will to make films than a need to say anything in them, she's merely exercising her privilege as a young artist. I admired *Carnage*, as she'd intended me to; I also enjoyed much of it. But I can't ignore the fact that the story is bull.

Suddenly starts out as if it, too, might be bull—grainy, black-and-white bull at that. Two young women in Buenos Aires, apparently bored with theft and pinball, accost a passing shopgirl and demand at knifepoint that she join them for sex. The shopgirl, who is obese and moon-faced, is named Marcia. She had tried knotting a scarf around her neck that morning, to give herself a little dash, but had put away the fancy sunglasses she'd recently bought, having understood they were a mistake. The abductors, who are thin and sharp-featured, call themselves Mao and Lenin. One has a leather jacket and the other a

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sweatshirt, but both wear the same style of knee-length skirt, white socks and heavy boots, which must have been stolen in pairs.

South American lesbian outlaws! What could be cooler? At this early point in the movie, you might reasonably suspect Diego Lerman of playing to the lower instincts of the arthouse and festival crowd; and you would not be wrong. But as he twists and turns his story—first making it a road movie, then changing it into a picture of provincial life and makeshift family—you discover something about Lerman that makes him remarkable. He knows better than to believe what these people believe about themselves. He sees through their acts—even Marcia's—because he actually cares about them.

The sign of his care is the close-up. Lerman uses a lot of this shot, in part to keep down the budget (I'll get to that in a moment) but mostly because he trusts his actors and wants to find his way into the movie through them. So he studies the glumness and self-pity of Marcia (Tatiana Saphir), looking for the moment when she'll break away from routine on the pretense that she can't help what she's doing. He watches the straight-faced insolence of Mao (Carla Crespo), knowing she'll eventually want someone to tell her no, and mean it; he keeps a close eye on the angry indifference of Lenin (Veronica Hassan), because that clenched face has to loosen sometime, and revert to something like the features of a hopeful 10-year-old. Lerman also pores over, and loves, a fourth face: that of Lenin's aged aunt, Blanca (Beatriz Thibaudin), who outrageously demands rent from the girls when they come to stay in her tumbledown little house in Rosario, but then repays them with smiles, songs and just the right sort of knowing misbehavior.

Toward the end of *Suddenly* there's a brief shot of Blanca sitting upright in bed at midnight, looking beatific in a halo of moonlight, that doesn't really need to be in the movie and yet sums up all its heart. That's why I trust in Lerman's promise a little more than in Gleize's. He still believes he can discover life through his camera; he's willing to let the world, and the movie, surprise him.

One of his biggest surprises, certainly, was that he finished the film. *Suddenly* was shot in 2001, the year of Argentina's economic collapse, using scant funds and the good will of the cast and crew, with production sometimes interrupted by street demonstrations or looting. So this picture, too, testifies to its director's overwhelming need to make a film. The good news is, it also testifies to a lot more. ■

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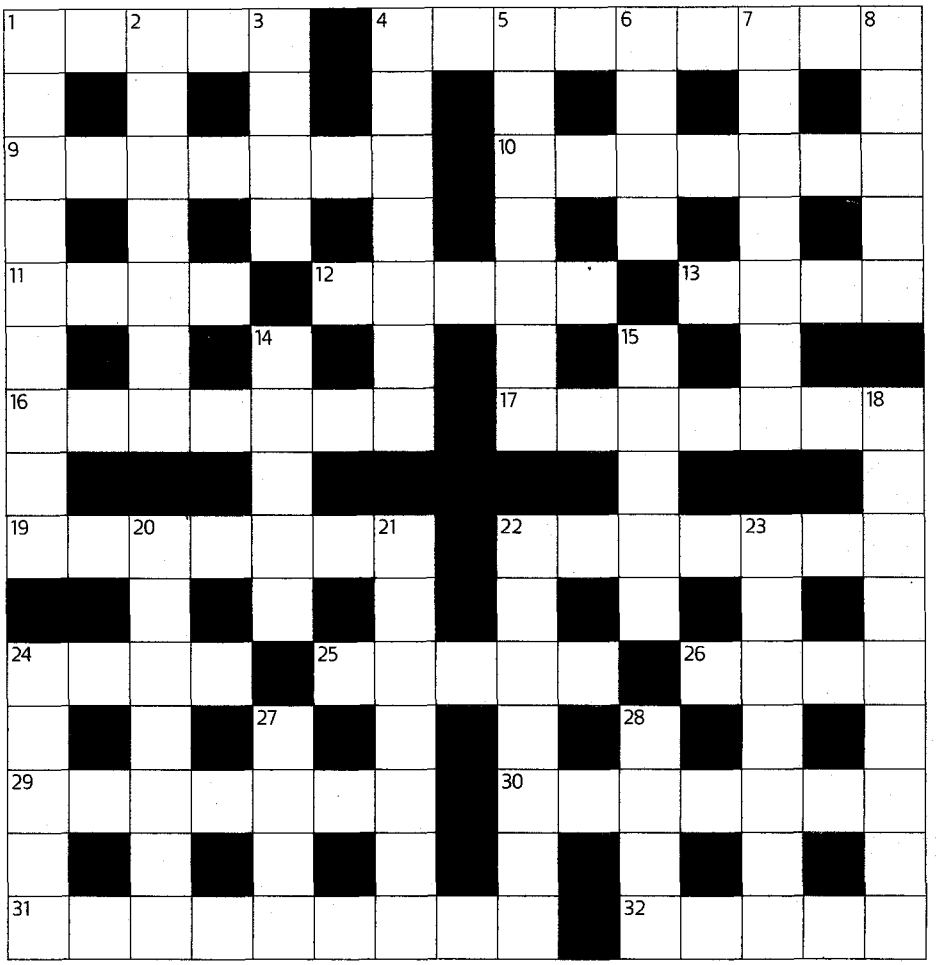
PUZZLE NO. 2906

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1, 15 down and **14** down What do you do when someone after taking a 27 hollers for help? Give up? (5,2,3,5)

4 Legal things with Lily, the onetime diva, had points that might be heard in church. (9)

9 Proving beginners come with an absence of bad habits. (7)

10 One who beat up on Antony and Cleopatra sounds a bit like what a Bostonian calls a really thrilling mystery! (7)

11 and **12** Shows up again to 13 a crop of fruit… (9)

13 and **3** down …and choose one that has something essential to old light reading of a Dickens character. (8)

16 Look at that fat person so described! One didn't win a thing if he did! (4,3)

17 The Spanish tale has a number inside—all coming back to show power! (7)

19 The eager type are said to be so loaded, so hold your fire! (7)

22 Very quickly you should see it, as in the sort here. (2,5)

24, 25 and **26** BC-AD…again and again. (4,5,4)

29 Bound this way, commonly speaking, in the old song book? (7)

30 Stuck in a rut, got a onetime pirate hangout to go to. (7)

31 and **32** A little grease on the runners might! (That's what procrastinators do.) (3,6,5)

DOWN

1 A number alternatively might have a key to your Paris pad—but certain bars might have such a sign. (5,4)

2 Comes up to show (with proper direction) what Pavlov's dog might do. (7)

3 See 13 across

4 Fancy scepter that royalty might think it is entitled to. (7)

5 Puts knuckles to the door, getting up with an embarrassed look, having acted like one in a ring. (7)

6 In Paris, bear with what belongs to you and me. (4)

7 Sloppily mops around the man's specious argument-making. (7)

8 Little bits of fuel needed to describe loose behavior. (5)

14 and **15** See 1 across

18 Furnished with battlements, make Nelson's beginnings fit inside. (9)

20 One of those things that Key watched over might be an approach to painting. (7)

21 If you do, you don't get something like the air. (7)

22 Thinks about something—something in your head set up. (It could be an important time for Caesar when about to dine.) (7)

23 Such things should evoke 4 across. (7)

24 Walker perhaps takes such a junction on the main line, which could prove quite a trial. (5)

27 Stick with the head of the house, both in Maine and England. (4)

28 Jones was looking for one of them that didn't belong to Noah. (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2905

	E	X	A	M	I	N	A	T	I	O	N	S		
C		R		I		O		A		R		P		W
H	E	A	R	T	H	S		H	O	B	B	E	M	A
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F	L	I	N	G		P	R	E	S	T	W	I	C	K
I		N		A		I				S		A		S
N	I	G	H	T	H	E	R	O	N		S	L	O	T
G				E		C		R		G				H
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S	U	C	C	E	S	S	O	R		F	R	I	L	L
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